

## **Employee Engagement and Innovative Work Behavior: A Case Study of Thai Airways International**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this research is to examine the factors that influence employee engagement and how it impacts organization innovative work behavior. The quantitative approach was designed for this research with 320 samples of Thai Airways International staff in the positions of Check-in, Boarding Gate, Baggage Service, and Lounge Attendant. The data was collected from various ways by sent a survey questionnaire form both offline and online, e.g., email, Facebook, Line chat. The data analyses process for this study was employed Structural Equation Modelling technique by using AMOS program. The findings revealed that engagement and innovation reinforce each other, especially an innovative work behavior influenced by an engaged employee, and an engaged employee are more likely act innovatively. Each employee interacts with the customers that have more chance to create innovative work behavior. The paper contributes to both academic and management perspective.

**Keywords:** employee engagement, innovative work behavior, job involvement, job responsibility, career growth, recognition

### **Introduction**

An employee becomes a vital and useful resource for a company to invest. Subsequently, this study can be justified to build the engagement of employee to improve their work performance, enhance employees' innovative behavior to create individual and service process to develop customer satisfaction and loyalty. It also helps to improve organization performance, increase resulting growth and revenue growth that are suitable for their business in the airline' industry. To achieve a competitive advantage in today's business world, including airline industry, innovation becomes a vital method (Noefer, 2009). It is found that the organization with no innovation nowadays has faced with difficulty to run the business to sustain growth and long-term success (Anderson et al., 2004).

An innovation is about relationships, for instance Chen and Sawhney (2010) believed the innovation can comes in many forms, some of which may have little to do with technology or research and development (R&D). Human resources within an organization are the most important ingredient in the success of innovation formula. The foundation of

innovation is ideas and employees who develop, carry, react to, and modify ideas (Van de Ven, 1986). Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin (1993) rightly argued that organizational innovation depends on creativity of the group, which depends on individual creativity. Innovations reflect creative efforts of employees. Thus, the employees are the ones who build, promote and breathe life into an innovative culture. The innovative potential of an organization resides in the knowledge, skills, and abilities of its employees (Patterson et al., 2009).

Hence, it was found that the topic of Employee Engagement and Innovative Work Behavior is still lacking, especially academic study. It is important to study this topic from number of reasons, firstly.

From last couple decades of fast-growing airlines industry, both domestic and international carrier increase a very competitive market environment; thus it caused very low revenue of some airlines, profit and margin that could collapse the airline industry if compared to other business (Doganis, 2009). Moreover, the change of air transport regulation is getting more dynamic and stricter in operation, The airline business, both full service and low-cost carrier, needs to maintain their business. However, the only fast adapting management that could survive in the tough competition is to bring the company to achieve the target revenue. This research aims to study organizational innovative work behavior. It is time for airlines or other business to equally focus on marketing (e.g. employee program) and external marketing e.g. customer program (Bansal et al., 2001). The fact and of course business-like airline industry could survive from the customer support; therefore, to persuade customers' loyalty to the airlines, the employee becomes a key to improve the loyalty by providing an excellent service to deliver the customers company products and services. This research was designed for the population of frontline ground employees as they play a vital role in contacting and interacting with the customers to increase the customers' satisfaction through their performance.

## **Research objectives**

The main aim of this research is to investigate the employee engagement and innovative work behavior: To achieve the research aim, two research objectives were stated:

1. To examine the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and employees' engagement
2. To examine the relationship between employee's engagement and innovative work behavior.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Drivers of employee engagement**

There is more research about employee engagement in the managerial field rather than in the academic as it has increased the interests and becomes more extensive for industry (Robinson et al., 2004). Since many types of research has a variety of employee engagement topics and the driver of employee engagement has also identified with the result from the survey. Moreover, they believed that employee engagement is a powerful tool for

the organization. The study indicates the driver of employee engagement and shows a key factor about motivation and job satisfaction affecting on employee engagement by analyzing each of the drivers. The research on employee engagement indicates that a highly engaged employee consistently performs well and enhance standard in the workplace (Harter et al., 2002); hence the question used to ask the employee is whether they have done the best every day on their job.

In spite of the term, employee engagement has found to be largely practical, however, it is rooted in the academic research so that there is critical academic literature on the subject (Kular et al., 2008). It is not that easy to define engagement and outline its scope because each study area on employee engagement explores different context. Several definitions of employee engagement have been defined in several ways; thus, the evolution of concepts could be understood; for instance, an earlier study of engagement literature by Goffman (1961) defined engagement as the “spontaneous involvement in the role” and a “visible investment of attention and muscular effort” (as cited in Wildermuth & Pauken, 2008). While Katz and Kahn (1966) reported that the necessity to engage employee with their work in the organization (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) experienced that the employee engagement is established when an employee is involved with their work and it is in a holistic sense. W.A. Kahn (1990) is esteemed in the academic world as the father of the employee engagement topic. He developed the principle of personal engagement.

The key finding from the past study of the driver of employee engagement from hospitality industry such as hotel has shown that rewards and recognition, career growth, communication, training and development are positively related to employee engagement (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013). Another research also indicates key findings of the driver as such interaction with manager, supervisor, co-worker and peers, subordinate, clear job responsibilities, reliable, are positively related to employee engagement (Mehta & Mehta, 2013). Arguments from other research explore that there are various factors of employee engagement such as job autonomy, job responsibilities, and clear direction are positively related to employee engagement (Kwenin et al., 2013). In this research, the key drivers of engagements are career growth, recognition, job involvement and job responsibilities, which are variables to examine the hypotheses in this research.

#### The review of engagement context

The following section discusses on engagement component, including career growth, recognition, job involvement, job responsibility and innovation.

#### Career growth

The process of growth of person's career is related to self-management and perception of an employee on their career development and advancement within the company. Besides, the possibilities of a job promotion help increase salary and a chance to learn new things in the company to develop their professional skills. Several studies examined that employees usually seek opportunities of career growth within company; therefore, any company can provide the opportunity for their employees. The strategy for an employee to set up their career goal in the organization while management provides the opportunity to grow in the

organization for them too. To engage an employee would be a positive result (Weng et al., 2010). This focuses on individual employees who are looking for promotion within the organization with intention to move from one department to another with the purpose of achieving their career goal (Ibarra, 1999). Hall explains that growth-orientation can be described as the psychological growth feelings and to achieve them personally related to their career goals which reflect the success (Hall, 1996).

### Recognition

This is the positive scenario when an employee has received good feedback, praise or reward from the company or management regarding the work performance. The recognition could be in the form of compliment, notification or circular newsletter within the organization (Lundberg et al., 2009). However, Deeprouse (1994) explained that in any organization, effective recognition is provided for the employees to reflect their job performance leading to improve productivity and performance, and it could also improve the performance of organizations. Csikszentmihalyi (2000) viewed that organizations put the recognition of their employees, on related to the level of satisfaction and happiness and maximizing the ability in their performance to achieve their task. Flynn (1998) argued that the way to uplift employees' spirit to boost their morale, rewards and recognition programs keep spirits high among employees, boosts up their morale and attitude to work. Some airlines implemented the employee of the month to recognize good performance and to stimulate employees to keep their good performance.

### Job involvement

Job involvement is a positive outcome of emotion that reflects the result of the job situation (Locke, 1976), also job satisfaction traditionally has been distinguished from job involvement. It is defined as a cognitive belief state reflecting the degree of psychological identification with one's job (Kanungo, 1982). Although both refer to the specific job, distinctions between the emotional state of liking one's job (job satisfaction) and the cognitive belief state of psychological identification with one's job (job involvement) have been advanced for some time (Locke, 1976). In the recent research about job involvement in the hotel business in Cyprus showed that the employee involved in the job decision and revealed positive feeling to the job itself when they have involved in any kind of decision making.

### Job responsibility

This is one of motivational factors which measure work-itself or motivation directly related to work. Job responsibilities are also related to job authority. The employee feels more satisfied with their job when they fully understand and are clear about their job responsibilities. The responsibility is positively related to satisfaction of freedom to decide. Previous studies show that job responsibilities lead to job satisfaction and consequently to employee engagement. (Dartey-Baah & Amoako, 2011). Job responsibilities can be considered as the value of job outcome from the employees' performance. Job outcome of

employees can indicate the degree of job responsibilities which are measured by other factors or variations. The level of responsibility may not only focus on the task that employee performs (Manove, 1997).

### Innovation

Innovation to make something new or create in the complex construct (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Innovations is defined as the development (generation) and/or application or adoption of new idea or behaviors (Amabile, 1988). West (1990) defined innovation as a new way which is relevant to the adoption and design with the intention to introduce and apply within a group, organization, individual, process, products or procedures with the significant benefit to the individual, organization or society. To summarize, innovation is a set of process in engaging behavior to create new ideas of process, products and services; hence, it is a mindset influenced by behavior, values, and beliefs. There is a research about the link between engagement and innovation. The experts from both academic and management confirmed that engagement is the key to innovation; thus employee engagement is significant that leads to innovative behavior of employee when they perform above and beyond their duties in creating new idea, suggesting the way to improve organizational and work performance in the innovative way (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

### The importance of innovative work behavior

Employee innovative work behavior defined as behavior from an employee towards recognition of a problem, generation of ideas, mobilization of support and realization of the ideas related to the initial problem (Janssen, 2000). Engagement in innovative behaviors includes behaviors related to the innovation process, i.e. idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization, the aim of producing innovations. Employee innovativeness is argued to cover a broader range of behaviors than creativity (Anderson et al., 2004). It is also defined innovative work behavior to initiate within a working role, group or organization of new and useful ideas, processes, products or procedures. The measure of Innovative Work Behavior captures both the initiation and implementation of creative ideas. The construct of IWB is closely related to employee creativity. Creativity is defined as the production of new and useful ideas concerning products, services, processes and six procedures (Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Amabile, 1988). However, some differences between the constructs exist (West & Farr, 1990). Unlike creativity, IWB is explicitly intended to provide some kinds of benefit. It has a clearer applied component and is expected to result in innovative output. Creativity is a crucial component of IWB, most evident at the beginning of the innovation process when problems or performance gaps are recognized, and ideas are generated in response to a perceived need for innovation (West, 1990).

### The link between employee engagement and innovative work behavior

Sundaray (2011) stated that the engaged employee has positive enthusiasm to their work and willingness in their job performance to creativity and innovation. Amabile (1996) suggested the theory of creativity to explain that engagement and innovation are linked to

each other. Csikszentmihalyi' also stated that creativity is constructed through an interaction (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). According to the definition of engagement as a positive...state of mind (Schaufeli et al., 2002) explain that high levels of energetic and enthusiastic towards their work from the different characteristic of person's engagement (i.e. vigor, dedication, and absorption). It is a sign of a positive state of mind hence, the innovation with full of creativity and willingness to go beyond their job task (Schaufeli, 2002). The research of employee engagement is linked to employees' innovative behavior from the examination of study and the result shown a significant percent (37.7%) of variance in innovative behavior (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). From the latest literature about employees' innovative behavior in the workplace with the result from the research on both qualitative and quantitative methods significantly showed that the engaged employee is highly affected by innovative behavior (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Innovative behavior make employee create a new way to provide services to the customer or give them the most satisfaction (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2008).

#### Theory foundation for this research

Theory shares many of features of other frameworks for commitment, particularly constructivist and approaches. Engagement Theory specifically promotes the activities that involve cognitive processes (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999). When Kearsley and Schneiderman (1999) have written this theory, they used the research of student engagement by using technology-based teaching and learning. Innovation theories based on foundation of creativity; therefore, the theory of creativity absolutely explains the phenomena of innovation, summarizes that creativity includes three important components with a creative person who practiced a creative process to new creative product. There are different researches and studies to examine individuals' behavior of creativity leading to innovation for those who are positively passionate and full of ideas. When they are facing problems, they think and act in different ways to solve or react to the problem with a distinctive solution. Therefore, several studies have shown the model and outcome to explain the theory of creativity (Van de Ven, 1986).

The discussion of several theories is developed and supportive for this research, Consequently, the conceptual framework has been raised from the theoretical framework and literature review. The number of variables to examine employee engagement consists of career growth, recognition, job involvement, and job responsibility. The conceptual framework in this research is shown in Figure 1.

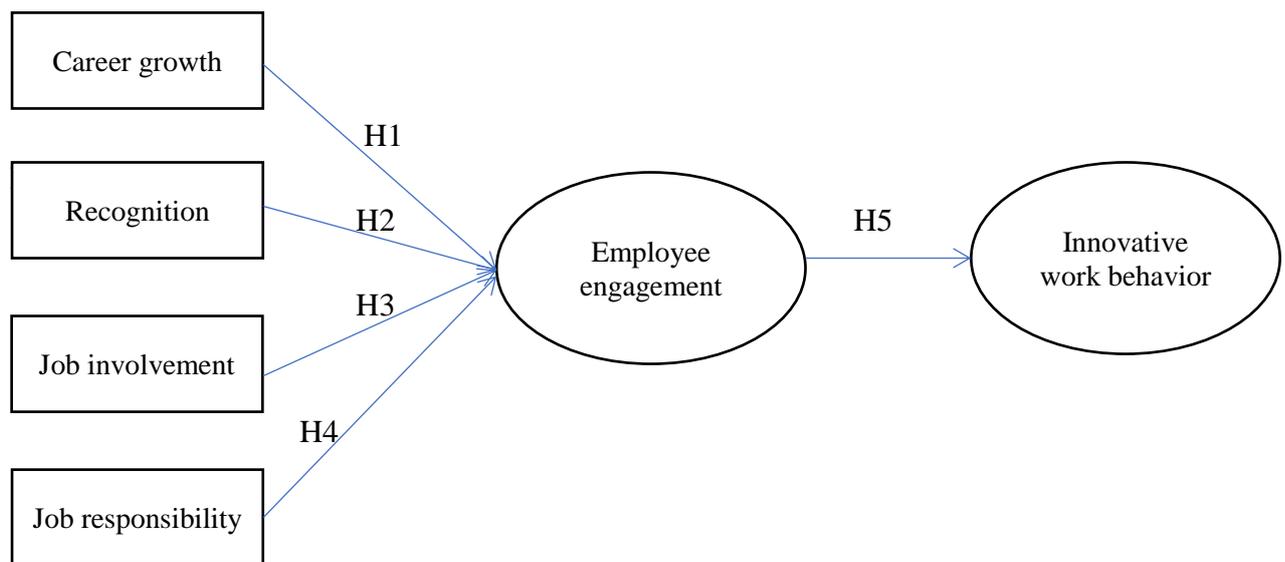


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Hence there were five hypotheses constructed in this research as follows:

H1: Career growth is positively related to employee engagement.

Career growth is connected to the individual who looks for promotion in the organization or the promotion within the department or moves to another department for a higher position to reach their goal. Career growth within the company is a very important factor that is a positive sign of employee’s job satisfaction, particularly the samples of this research at Thai Airways International, the national carrier of Thailand which has a good perspective of career growth among employees. Based on the discussion above, this research proposed the first hypothesis as career growth is positively related to employee engagement.

H2: Recognition is positively related to employee engagement.

Any organization that provides the employee the effective recognition to reflect their job performance will lead to improving their productivity and performance. Employees at Thai Airways International as a large organization with competitiveness for promotion, the recognition is the program which all employees expect to reach it. Based on the discussion above, this research proposes the second hypothesis as recognition is positively related to employee engagement.

H3: Job involvement is positively related to employee engagement.

Job involvement is the positive outcome of emotion that reflects the result of job situation. An employee would feel very good when they are involved in any process of job decision or improving performance of organization. Job involvement is a psychological state that reflects self-esteem and would lead to satisfaction. Based on the discussion above, this research proposes the third hypothesis as job involvement is positively related to employee engagement.

H4: Job responsibility is positively related to employee engagement.

The employee feels more satisfied with their job when they fully understand and are clear about their job responsibilities. The frontline ground employee is very much working on a specific task that they have been assigned; hence, clear and not overload job responsibility lead to engagement. Based on the discussion above, this research proposes the fourth hypothesis as job responsibility is positively related to employee engagement.

H5: Employee engagement is positively related to innovative work behavior.

An engaged employee is positively enthusiasm in their work. They are willing to create and innovate according to the theory of creativity as the foundation of innovation. An engaged employee who has a positive state of mind is more positive at work shows helpful and service-oriented behavior. The frontline ground employee has a chance to be creative in their work in an innovative way such as solving the problem in different ways, delivering customer service in a creative way. Given the nature of engagement, it is sensible to assume that engagement is linked to innovative behavior.

### **Methodology**

A quantitative research method was designed for this study as it concerns a numeric or statistical (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The importance in this research is to test factors that affect employee engagement. The concept of quantitative approach was linked to modes of measurement and procedure to analyze the variables. The research objective is the concepts represent an abstract idea that embodies the nature of observable phenomenon or an interpretation of why such phenomenon occurs.

The methodology of quantitative research maintains an assumption of an empiricist paradigm (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The intention is to establish, confirm, or validate relationships and to develop generalizations that contribute to the theory (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Quantitative research commences from a problem statement of the research and must involve a hypothesis, a literature review, and a quantitative data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The quantitative approach is primarily concerned with showing cause-effect relationships (Neuman, 2006). Therefore, the quantitative research design is suitable for this study in collecting data to conduct data analysis with the statistical outcome.

#### **Research samples**

This research determined 320 samples from the population of 900 calculated by the formula and table below with 5% erroneous plan and from a various positions of frontline ground staff in Check-in, Boarding Gate, Baggage Service, and Lounge Attendant. Participants were sampled respectively in demographic criteria e.g. age, sex, educational level, income, and marital status.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

When we know the size of the population, use the formula to calculate the sample size we need for the participants  
 n indicates the size of the sampling  
 N indicates the total of the population  
 e indicates the error % from overall sampling

Figure 2. Sampling formula  
 Source: Alreck and Settle (1994)

Table1.

*The sample size from a different known population*

<b>Population</b>	<b>Margin of error</b>			
<b>Error</b>	5%	3%	2%	1%
<b>50-100</b>	44-79	48-91	49-96	50-99
<b>150-200</b>	108-132	132-168	141-185	148-196
<b>500-1,000</b>	217-278	340-516	414-706	475-906
<b>10,000-100,000</b>	370-383	964-1,056	1,936-2,345	4,899-8,762

Source: Alreck and Settle (1994)

### Research instruments

The instrument was in the form of a questionnaire to measure the list of variables. There are 7 parts, and each part has been created to measure each variable such as job involvement, job responsibility, career growth, recognition, employee engagement, innovative work behavior including demographic characteristic. A total of 38 questions was in the survey form using Likert scale to measure the variables e.g. strongly agree (5), agree (4) neutral (3) Disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). It is to justify the 5 Likert scales as it is convenient and commonly used in the survey form for sample size to fill it. The questions have been selected as developed for this research and adopted from the other research with references provided.

### Pilot test

Pilot test refers to so-called feasibility studies which can be defined as small scale in the version or trial in preparation prior to the major study (Polit et al., 2001). To ensure the suitability and accuracy of the construct in the research instruments, the pilot test was used

with a pre-determined sample of 30 participants from the various positions of Check-in, Boarding Gate, Baggage Service, and Lounge Attendant. However, this study determined the reliability value of the instruments to meet the requirement consequently, the pilot test result must indicate the scales for validity and reliability of alpha value above the acceptable level a  $> .70$ ) as considered in this study.

The research instrument was tested for validity and reliability

It is important to measure of validity and reliability of the instruments in the quantitative research (Korb, 2012). Validity defined as the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study (Heale & Twycross, 2015) while reliability defined as the accuracy of the instrument in relation to the consistency of measurement (Heale & Twycross, 2015). This research has conducted the validity and reliability of the instrument. The examiner of IOC was three professors to evaluate the instruments. Subsequently, the criteria from Cronbach’s alpha analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 18.0 software. The numeric value of alpha as shown is the interrelation and dimension affects the value of alpha (Cortina, 1993). The ranging value of alpha between 0.70 to 0.95 was accepted as the validity and reliability. The result of Cronbach’s alfa-separated in 6 items were standardized as follows:

Data collecting procedures

The self-administered method was used in this research. The participants filled the survey form to answer the questionnaires by themselves. There are different ways to conduct this research both offline and online channel, e.g. face to face to hand the survey form to participant, online such as email, Facebook, Line chat in the form of Google online document. The most frequent response was from Line chat at the rate of 80% out of the total sent following by Facebook. Hand in survey form and the email was the least response. The data collection was started from 15 April to 31 May 2018, a total of 320 samples were received, out of 450 forms was sent (the response rate was 71%).

Table 2:

*Reliability statistic for this research*

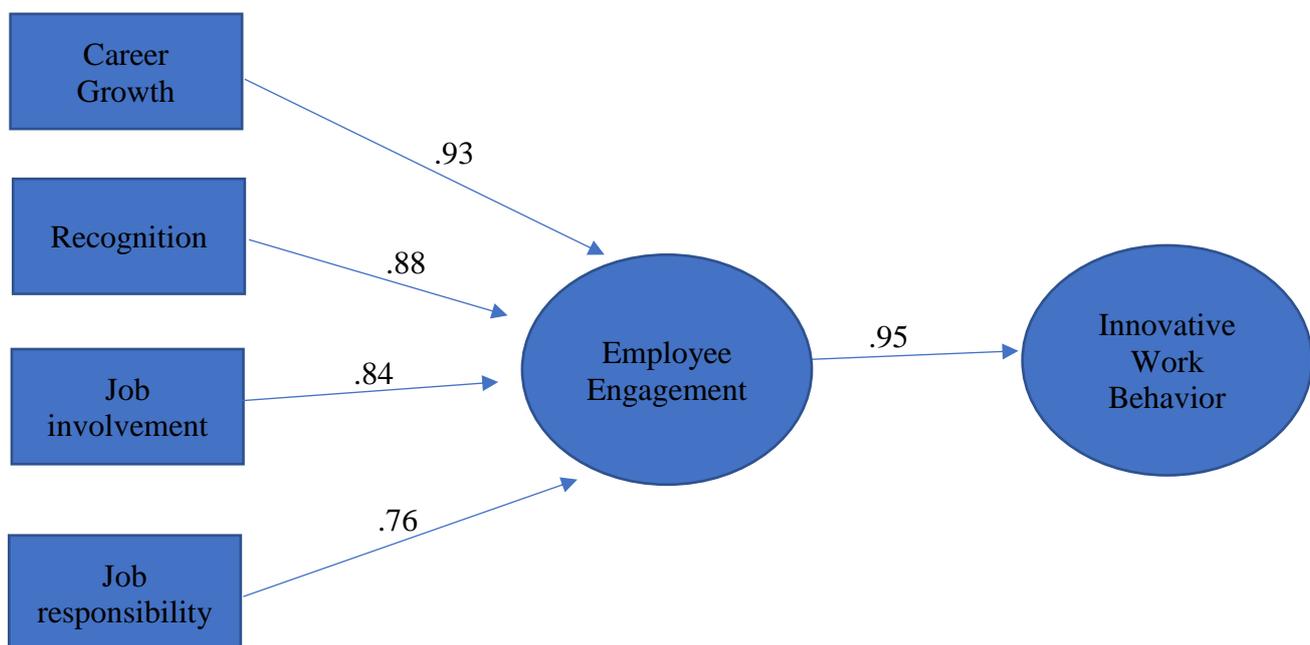
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cronbach’s alpha</b>	<b>No. of item</b>
<b>Career growth</b>	.934	38
<b>Recognition</b>	.701	38
<b>Job involvement</b>	.802	38
<b>Job responsibility</b>	.759	38
<b>Employee engagement</b>	.853	38
<b>Innovative work behavior</b>	.766	38

The alpha co-efficient in this research met the standard of .70 considered as the reliability of instruments.

### Result

The result of this research showed the coefficient of factors loading of career growth, recognition, job involvement, and job responsibility influence on employee engagement. (Figure 3)

The result of a demographic characteristic from the target sample size of 320 participants was collected. Demographics characteristics consist of gender, age, educational, position, year of service in the organization, income and birthday. The result showed that the majority participants were female (69.7%) aged between 36-40 (24.4%), having educational level at bachelor's degree (84.4%) working in the job position as Check-in staff (48.1%) with monthly income at 30,001-35,000 Baht (24.7%) and with more than 10 years of working experiences (39.7%), and most of them were born in Bangkok (66.9%).



Chi-square=127.543 df=210 Sig=.157 CMIN/df=2.437 n. 320  
 CFI=.942 NFI=.906 GFI=.943 AGFI=.830 IFI=.932  
 RMSEA=.065 RMR=.023

Figure 3. SEM model of employee engagement influences on innovative work behavior

The data revealed Structural equation modeling (SEM), the model employee engagement influence on innovative work behavior. The Chi-Square value is the traditional measure for evaluating overall model fit and assesses the magnitude of discrepancy between the samples and fit covariance matrices (Hu & Bentler, 1999). A good model fit would provide insignificant result at a 0.05 threshold (Barrett, 2007). The result has found acceptable threshold levels and consistent with the concept (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 1998); (Bollen, 1989) by Chi – Square = 127.543, df = .210, Sig. = .157 < 0.05,

CMIN/df. = 2.437 > 5.0, CFI = .942 < .90, NFI .906 > .090, GFI = .943 > .90, AGFI = .830 > .80, IFI = .932 > .90, RMSEA = .067 > .50, RMR = .023 > .05 Furthermore. Details will be explained as below in the table and description.

Table 3.

*Fit indices for proposed the model the causal factors that can affect employee engagement and innovative work behavior*

Index	Criteria	Result	References	Result
Chi – Square	p. > 0.05	127.543	Hair et al. (1998), Bollen (1989)	Good fit
CMIN/df.	< 5.0	2.437	Bollen (1989) , Diamantopoulos, Siguaw, and Siguaw (2000)	Good fit
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.943	Hair et al. (1998), Browne and Cudeck (1993)	Good fit
AGFI	≥ 0.80	0.830	Baumgartner, H., & Hombur, C., (1996), Gefen et al (2000)	Good fit
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.906	Hair et al. (1998) , Mueller (1996)	Good fit
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.932	Hair et al. (1998) , Mueller (1996)	Good fit
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.942	Hair et al. (1998) , Mueller (1996)	Good fit
RMR	< 0.05	0.023	Diamantopoulos , Siguaw (2000)	Good fit
RMSEA	< 0.05	0.067	Hair et al. (1998),Browne and Cudeck (1993)	Good fit

Summary of the SEM analysis result

1. The result showed from factors loading of employee engagement’s variables. In ranking career growth is the most significant factor loading (.93), followed by recognition, job involvement and job responsibilities.
2. Employee engagement variable has a direct effect on innovative work behavior, the regression weight estimate of standardized coefficients 0.95, has a standard error of about 0.085, t –value 7.84, p-value = 0.000 < 0.001,
3. The results amplified the antecedent role of employee engagement on innovative behavior. Majority of respondents stated that there is a close and positive relationship between employee engagement and innovation. They strongly believe that engaged employees perform at a higher level and bring passion and interest to their job, which often leads to innovation in the workplace.
4. Respondents felt career growth plays a very important role in engagement. They held the view that collaboration in teams, is nested in organizations and often leads to higher engagement among employees. Furthermore, they emphasized the need of interdisciplinary teams that are more likely to produce innovative solutions than homogenous teams.
5. The recapitulate of hypotheses raised for this study to examine the relationship of engagement variables and employee engagement influence on innovative work behavior as the result showed that all hypothesis outcome as supportive with the r square resulted from the analysis statistically. Career growth is the most significant factor loading influence on the engagement, organization that can provide the career growth for an employee to see the opportunity of promotion, advance in the career, moving up to next level with more responsibility of job and challenging following by the recognition, job involvement, job responsibility. Those factors could directly affect innovative

work behavior through the engagement by saying that employee, however, must be engaged with the organization prior to feeling or acting as innovative work behavior.

Table 4.

*Summary of hypotheses in this study*

No.	Hypotheses	(R <sup>2</sup> )	Result
H1	Career growth is positively related to employee engagement	83.00%	Supportive
H2	Recognition is positively related to employee engagement	77.00%	Supportive
H3	Job involvement is positively related to employee engagement	75.00%	Supportive
H4	Job responsibilities is positively related to employee engagement	68.00%	Supportive
H5	Employee engagement is positively related to innovative behavior	75.00%	Supportive

### Discussion and Conclusion

It is accepted that innovation is vital for any organizations to sustain their business growth (Slåtten et al., 2011). To confirm that employee engagement positively impacts on innovative work behavior. The role and capacity of the organization in providing facilities and support the employees which engage them and in turn cultivates their innovative work behavior should be explored and discussed. Employee engagement practices are in the purest form, innovation exercises. Hence, to engage employees, the organization must invest in engagement practices. They may need to go little further to align people to its strategic direction and vision to drive and sustain growth. Employee innovates the way to solve problem, the way to provide quality services to customer from the normal pattern. It is not a very new thing; however, when engaged employee acts more innovative than not-engaged employee; for instance, engaged employee often notice the customers' special day when they check-in and immediately blessing customer "Happy Birthday"; moreover, also pass the special message to other staff in another department e.g. at the Boarding Gate, and provide some special greeting, This behavior more happens to the engaged employee. Another action that engaged employee act in the innovative way to solve customer's problem is that when the customer carries excess cabin baggage allowance e.g. more than 7 kilos; they would help the customer by transferring some items to another small bag provided by the company and let customer carry as a hand carry as the optional rather than just advise the customer to transfer to their check-in baggage that could cost more time to do it. This happened to the engaged employee rather that not-engaged employee that just follows normal policy.

Career growth is the most significant factor according to the coefficient factor loading statistically at .93, the employee would look for any opportunity for promotion in their career, they focus on job promotion to ensure that if they put the efforts to work they will have a chance for job promotion. Particularly, the research samples at Thai Airways International, the national carrier of Thailand, the employees feel proud to work with this organization and

hope for career growth in the future rather than another benefit that organization provides. The recognition influences employee engagement as recognition from the job they are doing or any compliment from the customer when organization and management recognize their performance that would make an employee feel valuable to the organization. While job involvement and job responsibility are related to work itself, they can feel comfortable on doing a job and the sense of ownership to take responsibility to solve customer's problem. Moreover, when an employee can be involved in any process of making a decision or improving customer service plan would also make employee feel they really belong to this organization and engaged to their job, organization benefits in the end.

Innovation becomes vital to improve company performance in technology and employee. The result shows the high level of factor loading, to examine the innovative work behavior from 5 questions as considered as observed variables INBE 1 – 5 to confirm the outcome of the latent variable. Employees' innovative behavior, from the 5 observed variables; the highest factor loading is from IWB5 "*I often try to invent new ways of improving the service quality*" the coefficient was at .78 as the maximum ratio. It can be explained that employees understand the terms of innovation. They feel good when they attempt to improve service quality, however, this behavior on innovativeness, create new things or improve from the current procedure to be a better procedure.

Thai Airways International, the target samples in this research were beneficial when their employee works effectively and efficiently to improve the performance and to gain this benefit in terms of building the level of engagement. However, innovation often happens to senior employee who has worked for 6 years up compared to junior employee who worked less than 6 years. The reason is senior employee is confident to make any decision and tries out new way to solve the problem as the empowerment of senior employee has more in action rather than junior employee; however, it is a very good sign to build the innovative culture within the organization from generation to generation. Thai Airways International has invested in innovative technology to improve their products to increase company revenue. This is a good opportunity to build the innovative work behavior of the employee. It could be seen in the way of showing helpful, service oriented, customer-oriented behavior even though the procedure may not have much chance to create innovative because of company policy and restriction. The behavior shows their enthusiasm in creating an innovative way that would improve the service quality and benefit to the organization at the end if Thai Airways International emphasize to enhance the innovative culture in the organization to increase the level of trustworthy in the organization.

Senior employee would be able to think outside of the box to provide service quality and solve problem, when standard remains. Experienced employee gained more capability to do thing innovatively, when they stay longer in the company, the level of engagement is higher, the feeling of belonging to company is also high that caused better ways to work from normal standard or procedure. Besides the characteristic of an employee, innovative behavior acts more active full of energetic and dynamic to show how engaged they have at work. This aligns with literature review earlier the engaged employee that show more enthusiasm to do the job in the way of innovative and creative way. In addition, the empowerment in the finding that when the company gives them empowerment to encourage them to invent creativity and innovative way to improve their job performance.

As the result of SEM Goodness, Fit Index GFI at .943 > 0.9 per statistically is considered good fit model hence organization should emphasize on how to enhance the

innovation campaign to their employee to the objective of improving organizational performance, services quality and employee performance too.

### **Contributions of this research**

#### Academic contribution

From the past study in the academic on the topic of the airline's industry, most of the researchers studied airline's performance, customer satisfaction and how to improve the operation performance; thus there is limited academic research about human capital such as employee engagement in the hospitality industry, hotel, restaurant, and general industry. Therefore, this research can fill the gap of airlines industry and employee engagement. The theory and literature review in this research are useful for any studies in the related topic of employee engagement and human capital.

#### Managerial contribution

The managerial benefit for human resource management (HRM) in any organizations to use this result as information in creating employee program to build the engagement within the organization and consequently to initiate innovative work behavior culture for long term success of the business. Based on this research, the engagement is significant for all organizations, and an investment towards engagement should be emphasized for sustainable business development.

### **Implications for future research**

There are limitations of this research that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the primary research about the innovative work behavior in the airline industry is quite new and limited of literature; however, it can be found in a few studies. Secondly, it was time consuming to complete their questionnaire without disruption their duties. Thirdly, the errors and mistakes of survey form were at high percentage of about 10% that unusable. Finally, as the literature review is quite limited in the airline industry about career growth, recognition, job involvement and job responsibility set for the variable of employee engagement, therefore, researcher reviewed from the relevant industry, e.g. hospitality, hotel and apply to this research.

Future research, the recommendation of the qualitative method should be considered to approach the participant for deep information and could be in the form of focus group interview and face to face interview. Information from management side, human resources (HR) manager get the data for analysis from both employee and management. Other variables from extrinsic motivation are recommended e.g. empowerment, self-determination for future research. This is equaled between employee and organization to have a mutual understanding. It is essential to have the conclusion concept that can contribute and implement within the organization.

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