Review of human resource practices in hospitality and tourism

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Abstract

This study identifies the human resource practices used in the hospitality and tourism industry through the review of articles published in the hospitality and tourism journals (45 articles, 10 journals) and the other non-hospitality journals (26 articles, 17 journals). The review suggests that key human resource (HR) practices used in the industry are recruitment/selection, performance management, compensation, training and development, employee empowerment, employee recognition and reward. The study also identifies the focus of past HR research in the hospitality and tourism industry. Human resources management (HRM) practices, employee turnover, employee retention/intention to stay or leave, job satisfaction/dissatisfaction, work family conflict/work life balance/work family issues/flexible working/employee well-being, customer satisfaction/firm performance among others have been the dominant aspects of past research. The study also presents a range of gaps in HR research in the hospitality and tourism industry for potential future research.

Keywords: Human resources, practices, hospitality, tourism, industry

1. Introduction

With growing global competition and increasing consumer expectations, the competitive edge for organisations and destinations and the ability to deliver quality products and services within tourism and hospitality will depend on human resource dimension (Baum, Amoah, & Spivack, 1997). In this process, ability to hire high-quality employees and maximise their contributions to the firm plays an important role (Chow, Haddad, & Singh, 2007). The labour management aspect has drawn considerable interest of the academics and researchers in the hospitality related literature (Davidson, Guilding, & Timo, 2006). Although human resources management (HRM) development had its origin in the large manufacturing sector it is gaining its popularity in other sectors. For example, in the hotel industry, Worsfold (1999) noted that there is a correlation between size and the presence of HRM practices in the form of written contracts - provision of equal employment opportunity has also been evident in firms which employed more than 30 employees. Management literature suggests that HRM is positively associated with employee outcomes and organisational performance (Voorde, Paauwe, & Veldhoven, 2012). However, Lucas and Deery (2004) argued that the establishment of this relationship has been vague.

The hospitality industry is characterised by poor pay, poor employment conditions and a low take-up of human resource (HR) practices/informal HR policies (e.g. family leave, paid maternity leave, equal employment opportunity, health and safety policy, grievance procedures, communication mechanisms) and relies on low cost and temporary workforce (Knox & Walsh, 2005). It has also been found that the hospitality industry particularly in Australia does not plan for sustainable labour practices and employee retention as casualisation has been the dominant strategy to manage the changing demand for labour (Davidson & Wang, 2011). High level of turnover at both managerial and operational levels is evident in the Australian hotel industry leading to loss of productivity, lower profitability, and increasing level of training and replacements costs (Davidson & Wang, 2011).

Hence the purpose of this review is to identify various HR practices that have been used in the hospitality and tourism industry, identify the key themes of HR-related past research, and identify the gap for future research.

2. Methodology

In reviewing the literature on HR research in tourism and hospitality industry, the key words used for identifying the relevant articles were human resource practices in tourism/hospitality, flexible work arrangements in tourism/hospitality industry, staff turnover and job satisfaction in tourism/hospitality industry using Google Scholar. The search produced a considerable number of articles published in hospitality and tourism journals and also in non-hospitality and tourism journals (e.g. management and HR related journals) as the HRM is influenced by management theories which have evolved with changes in the environmental factors such as economic, social, political, and technological factors (Davidson, McPhail, & Barry, 2011). Using random approach, altogether 45 articles were reviewed published in the key hospitality and tourism journals (n=10) and 26 articles were reviewed published in the non-hospitality and tourism journals (n=17). The articles reviewed included quantitative (empirical/survey) approach, qualitative approach (interviews/focus groups and case studies), and meta-analysis approach (see table 1 for the details of journals and number of articles from each journal).

Table 1: Journals used for this research

Number	Journal Title	Number of articles
1	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	10
2	International Journal of Hospitality Management	10
3	Tourism Management	9
4	The International Journal of Human Resource Management	7
5	Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism	5
6	Hospitality Management	4
7	Journal of Management	3
8	Annals of Tourism Research	2
9	Tourism and Hospitality Research	2
10	Academy of Management Journal	2
11	International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy	1

12	Employee Relations	1
13	International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration	1
14	Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research	1
15	Personnel Psychology	1
16	Human Resource Management Journal	1
17	Journal of Organizational Behavior	1
18	Cornell University Publication	1
19	Applied Ergonomics	1
20	Journal of Indian Business Research	1
21	Human Resource Management	1
22	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	1
23	International Journal of Management Reviews	1
24	International Journal of Business and Management	1
25	Journal of Vocational Behavior	1
26	Organisational Dynamics	1
27	Human Resource Planning	1
	Total:	71
	Hospitality Journals (10)	45
	Non-hospitality (management and HR) Journals (17)	26

3. Focus of past research

The focus of past research in the selected articles is presented in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, the dominant themes covered in the past research include HRM practices (12); staff/employee turnover/intention to stay or leave/retention (12); job satisfaction/dissatisfaction (10); work family conflict/work life balance/work family issues/flexible working/employee well-being (7), customer satisfaction/firm performance (7). The following sections present the outcome of review particularly the HR practices used in the hospitality/tourism industry followed by the identification of research gap.

Table 2: Focus of HR-related past studies

Focus of research	Past studies	Type of study

Staff turnover; employee dissatisfaction in hospitality industry	Mohsin (et al. (2015); AIBattat & Som (2013)	Empirical 'survey', Review
Research agenda 'Generation Y hospitality employees' -	Solnet & Hood (2008)	Review
Work-family conflict, job satisfaction, organizational commitment	Namasivyam & Zhao (2007)	Empirical 'survey'
Employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, financial performance	Chi & Gursoy (2009)	Empirical 'survey'
High performance HR practices, work engagement, generation effects, hotel employees, performance	Karatepe (2013); Park & Gursoy (2012)	Empirical 'survey'
Antecedents and consequences of job satisfaction in hotel industry	Yang (2010)	Empirical 'survey'
Employee retention and WLB – job attitudes, employee dimensions, organisational strategies; WLB framework	Deery (2008); Deery & Jago (2009)	Review
Flexible working in the hospitality industry	Lockwood & Guerrier (1989)	Empirical 'survey'
Work and family issues 'work characteristics, work stress and burnout' (little research)	Cleveland et al. (2007)	Qualitative research 'focus groups and interviews'
Temporary work, working hours, work-life conflict and health in hotel work (little research)	McNamara et al. (2011)	Empirical 'survey'
Staff turnover in the Greek tourism industry – current and future strategies	Chalkiti & Sigala (2010)	Empirical 'survey'
Policy dimensions of HRM	Baum et al. (1997)	Conceptual
HRM practices, service excellence, turnover intentions and psychological contract, gender role, work-family conflict	Santhanam et al. (2017); Lu at al. (2016); Blomme et al. (2010a); Blomme et al. (2010b)	Empirical 'survey'
HRM best practice, employee satisfaction, job retention, firm performance	Ashton (2018); Huselid (1995); Huselid et al. (1997)	Empirical 'survey'

High performance HR practices and service climate, service behaviour, hotels	Tsaur & Lin (2004); Tang & Tang (2012); Wang et al. (2011)	Empirical 'survey'
HRM, Job satisfaction, morale, optimism, turnover; skill shortages; nepotism	Chow et al. (2007); Davidson & Wang (2011); Davidson et al. (2010); Arasli et al. (2006)	Empirical 'survey'
Strategic HRM, integrative HRM, traditional HRM, universal HRM, performance, and future research agenda	Madera et al. (2017); Gannon et al. (2015); Panayotopoulou et al. (2003); Wright & Boswell (2002); Hughes (2002); Sheppeck & Militelo (2000); Wright (1998); Schuler (1992);	Case studies, review
Job involvement, work engagement, job satisfaction, commitment, and turnover	Zopiatis et al. (2014); Yeh (2013)	Empirical 'survey'
HRM, employment, organizational flexibility, turnover culture, Australian, MNC China and Singapore hotel industry	Davidson et al. (2006); Knox et al. (2005); Deery & Shaw (1997); Cheng & Brown (1998); Nankervis & Debrah (1995)	Empirical 'survey'; Case studies
HRM practices, service quality / behaviour, customer satisfaction, and performance in the hotel industry	Chand (2010); Chand & Katou (2007); Cho et al. (2006); Browning (2006); Alleyne et al. (2006); Worsfold (1999)	Empirical 'survey'; Mixed method 'focus groups/survey'; Review
Individual and organisational factors, job satisfaction and intention to leave/stay in the hospitality industry	Kim & Jogaratham	Empirical 'survey'

	(2010); Cho et al. (2009)	
HRM, hospitality, tourism, change, employee well, being, performance, and future agenda for research 'neglected and fragmented'	Baum et al. (2016); Baum (2015); Davidson et al. (2011); Baum (2007); Voorde et al. (2012)	Review
High performance work practices, HRM issues, commitment, job satisfaction, organizational performance	Kusluvan et al. (2010); Kooij et al. (2010); Combs et al. (2006); Lucas & Deery (2004)	Review: Meta-analysis
HR recruitment, selection and retention issues in the hospitality and tourism industry	Chan & Kuok (2011)	Empirical 'survey'
Training and development, job satisfaction, loyalty and intention to stay	Costen & Salazar (2011)	Empirical 'survey'
Seasonality in tourism and HR challenges	Joliffe & Farnsworth (2003)	Conceptual
Innovation / creativity in tourism and hospitality, HRM practices	Jaiswal & Dhar (2017); Chang et al. (2011); Hjalager (2010)	Empirical 'survey'; Review
Employee turnover and retention strategies	Yang et al. (2012)	In-depth interviews

4. Human resources practices used in hospitality and tourism industry

Understanding how HR can be managed to improve creativity and enhance productivity is a very important task both for the researchers and practitioners as they can be a major component in a firm's cost structure (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006). The literature suggests that HR practices can be a source of competitive advantage if they are aligned with a firm's competitive strategy (Panayotopoulou, Bourantas, & Papalexandris, 2003; Schuler ,1992). Some of the high performance work practices (HPWPs) that have been widely discussed in the human resource literature include self-managed teams, decentralised decision making, employee empowerment, open communication, information sharing, flexible work arrangements/job assignments, performance-based pay, rewards and incentives, training programs to develop knowledge/skills and abilities, staffing based on person-job and person-organisation fit, assessment of attitude, job design, grievance procedures, labour-management participation programs, comprehensive employee recruitment and selection procedures, promotion, and extensive

employee involvement in decision making process (Huselid, 1995; Evans & Davis, 2005; Wang, Yi, Lawler, & Zhang, 2011; Karatepe, 2013). Posthuma, Campion, Masimova, and Campion (2013) presented a taxonomy of high performance human resource architectures in four levels: high performance work (HPW) principles, HPW policies, HPW practices and HPW products.

HR practices used in hospitality and tourism industry include recruitment and selection, manpower planning, job design, training and development, quality circle and pay system (Chand, 2010); information sharing, job analysis, internal recruiting, attitude surveys, labour management participation surveys, grievance procedure, pre-employment tests, compensation on job performance, performance appraisals, promotion criteria (seniority, merit, etc.), and training (Cho, Woods, Jang, & Erdem, 2006); selection policies, participation in decision-making, training, performance appraisals, empowerment, and compensation (Tang & Tang, 2012); job analysis, staffing, career planning, performance appraisal, pay-for-performance, employee voice, dispute resolution, and job security (Chow et al., 2007); recruitment and selection 'consisting of: harmonised terms and conditions, single status for all staff, internal promotion norm, employment test criteria, merit element in selection, multi-skilling and experience', manpower planning 'consisting of: formal manpower planning, work culture, career planning, involvement of all departments', job design 'flexible job description, development of learning organisation, cross-cultural job design, team working', training and development (T&D) 'consisting of: need based T&D criteria, formal system of induction, learning organisation, formal T&D', quality circle 'consisting of staff involvement in objective setting, production/service staff responsible for their service, employees are involved in quality circles, regular use of attitudes surveys', and pay system 'consisting of: staff informed about market condition and company performance, merit element in pay package, formal appraisal for all staff, no financial incentives, social appreciation and recognition (Chand & Katou, 2007). Some of the skills that the employees demonstrate in their application include human relation skills, oral communication skills, interpersonal skills, problem solving skills, teamwork skills, related work experience, critical thinking skills, leadership skills, business knowledge skills, written skills, office information system skills, computer software application skills, computer literacy, and non-verbal skills (Chan & Kuok, 2011).

Bundles of HRM practices include: 1) performance appraisal, remuneration, and training; 2) recruitment/selection, training and development, compensation and benefits; 3) training, communication, empowerment, performance appraisal; 4) hiring the right people, developing employees, empowering employees, providing support systems and retaining the best people; 5) employee recognition, respect and reward (Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan, & Buyruk, 2010).

5. Research gaps in hospitality and tourism human resources: a brief review

Kusluvan et al. (2010) reported that there is a gap between theoretical propositions / empirical findings and the realities of people management in the hospitality and tourism industry. The possible reason why such gap has arisen has been attributed to several factors which include pool of low-skilled and easily replaceable employees, deficiency in the methodologies used in past studies, unprofessional managers and owners, high costs and small profit margins, unstable and insufficient demand, seasonality effect, competitive pressure on organisations, etc. (Kusluvan et al., 2010, p. 192). To address this issue, more conceptual and empirical studies have been recommended. The second issue they have identified is the conceptual developments in the selection of right employees to incorporate employee personality, service orientation, emotional intelligence etc. as there is growing importance attached to these dimensions of people management. In terms of methodologies, it has also been argued that most of the empirical studies are based on subjective perceptions of mangers – use of objective

data incorporating the views of employees and customers could make a worthwhile contribution to the HRM literature (Kusluvan et al., 2010).

Although there are several studies available dealing with HR issues in the general and strategic management literature, validity of many of the propositions and models presented in the HR literature have not been tested in the hospitality and tourism industry. Management of employment / human resources in hospitality and tourism industry is challenging because of seasonality effect / variations in demand with time (Joliffe & Farnsworth, 2003) which suggests that there is a need for further research in this area. The hospitality industry is expected to grow with time not only in developed economies but also in developing economies giving rise to different ways of handling hospitality to match the specific culture which calls for innovative and location-specific models as one-size fits model does not work (Davidson, McPhail, & Barry, 2011). Therefore, further research is needed to explore the applicability of universal HRM in hospitality industry and examine whether there are any barriers in its application (Hughes, 2002).

Although past studies suggest that employee turnover in the hospitality industry can be attributed to inappropriate work placement, inappropriate recruitment process, dissatisfaction with the compensation (salary, benefits, etc.), job stress and burnout, there is still a gap in understanding of the factors that lead to turnover (Yang, Wan, & Fu, 2012). It has also been discussed that job stress and burnout are some of the aspects of employee well-being leading to employee turnover. However, there is still a gap in understanding of how and why HRM leads to specific types of well-being (e.g. happiness, health, relationship) and whether they are associated with employee and organisational performance (Voorde et al., 2011). Despite the availability of several studies dealing with job involvement, organisational commitment, job satisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic), and turnover intentions of hospitality employees, many of them are 'somewhat anecdotal in nature' (Zopiatis, Constanti, & Theocharous, 2014, p. 136). Therefore, further studies on employee turnover can be justified on the grounds that employees have a big role to play in the hospitality industry and there is a need to develop and implement the policies to mitigate employee dissatisfaction and their intention to quit (AlBattat & Som, 2013). There is also a gap in understanding of the relationships between organisational factors such as intrinsic motivation, supervisory leadership, participative decision-making, job satisfaction and employees' intention to stay or leave (Kim & Jogaratnam, 2010).

Based on a review of over 100 HRM related papers, Lucas and Deery (2004) noted that HRM research in hospitality sector is basically a replication of mainstream HR research or hospitality data has been used to test generic HR theory. Therefore, they have proposed that HR research should be extended to make it more specific to hospitality industry so that the research becomes more relevant and useful. They also have drawn the attention of researchers in addressing the following issues: 1) 'the role of HR in managing the 24/7 work environment and the impact of shift work on health, work and family life, 2) managing the safety and well-being of employees in dangerous environments, and 3) the conflict between the cultural values of the owners and managers of large global companies and those of the host company' (Lucas & Deery, 2004, p. 471).

Through the review of the literature, Solnet & Hood (2008) made an assessment of the impact of new generation of employees entering the hospitality workforce and presented a research framework linking the following factors: 1) external influences (societal, political, technological, and historical) on Gen Y work values (respect, recognition, input and involvement, continuous development, supportive management, fairness, tolerance, equity, concern for individual welfare); 2) organisational influences (vision, mission, values, resources, expertise, strength of culture, service orientation) on HRM strategies (recruitment and selection, induction, training and development, empowerment, supervisor support, intrinsic and extrinsic benefits, communication, performance management); 3) the influences of Gen Y work values and HRM strategies on Gen Y work attitudes (job

satisfaction, motivation, and organisational commitment); 4) influence of Gen Y attitudes and Gen Y behaviours (level of absenteeism, standard of performance, and intention to stay and leave); 5) the influence of Gen Y behaviours on organisational outcomes (profitability, turnover, market share, customer retention, reputation as an employer, and competitive advantage). Although Park & Gursoy (2012) incorporated generational (Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millenials) differences in work engagement in their investigation of the relationships between work engagement, job satisfaction and turnover intention, there is still a need to test the various relationships in the framework proposed by Solnet & Hood (2008).

In relation to hospitality employee turnover, Deery (2008) focused on the following four key themes that frequently appeared in the literature: job attitudes (e.g. job satisfaction, organisational commitment), personal employee dimensions (e.g. stress re role clarity and resource inadequacy, job burnout, exhaustion, job overload through 'deliberate understaffing, temporary staff shortages, unrealistic task criteria'), work-life balance (e.g. job stress, job characteristics, work-family conflict), and organisational strategies to assist employee retention (e.g. HR practices – recruitment and training). Based on this review, Deery (2008, p. 803) presented a framework linking: 1) organisational and industry attributes (long and unsocial working hours, low pay, low skill requirement, educational mismatch, lack of career development) with personal employee dimensions and work-life conflict, 2) personal employee dimensions and work-life conflict with improved organisational strategies, and 3) improved organisational strategies with increased job satisfaction, organisational commitment and employee retention. Deery (2008) made a number of recommendations which include the provision of flexible working hours, flexible work arrangements etc. so that the hospitality organisations will be able to retain their talented staff. Deery (2008) argued that employee turnover causes stress, work overload, low job satisfaction and little organisation commitment which needs to be addressed. There is also a need to examine work-life balance issues in the hospitality and tourism industry and its relationship with organisation outcomes (employee turnover, absenteeism, quality of work life and performance) and proposed a framework for testing and further refining (Deery & Jago, 2009).

Seasonality, low income, poor social protection, job and income insecurity, work-life conflict and stress are some of the characteristics of the service sector (e.g. hospitality, agriculture) making employment in the sector precarious (McNamara, Bohle, & Quinlan, 2011). Despite the requirement for long, irregular and unpredictable hours of work leading to higher level of employee turnover in the hospitality and tourism industry, work and family issues have received little attention of researchers in terms of their assessment of current practice, future potential and health effects (McNamara et al. 2011; Cleveland, O'Neill, Himelright, Harrison, Crouter, & Drago, 2007; Lockwood & Guerrier, 1989).

Blomme, Rheede, and Tromp (2010a) suggested that there is a need for in-depth research in examining the relationship between the measures of psychological contract and employees' intentions to leave in the hospitality industry. Psychological contract refers to the relationship between employer and employees e.g. how employer treats its employees and what kind of contribution employee makes into the job. It is important to ensure that there is a good understanding of the expectations of inputs and outcomes from both sides. Attention has also been drawn to apply psychological contract theory in examining employees' work-related behaviour in the hospitality industry for the delivery of high quality service (Lu, Capezio, Restubog, Garcia, & Wang, 2016).

Although HR managers are aware of the adverse impact of employee turnover on productivity and service quality, there is a need for further study to examine the time and money spent by hotels in training new employees and their implications on employee performance (Davidson, Timo, & Wang, 2010). The role of HRM practices in hospitality industry in promoting incremental and radical innovation has also been discussed particularly the use of 'hire for skill and train for skill' strategy (Chang, Gong, & Shum, 2011, p. 816). The innovation research in

tourism is, however, at the early stage and it needs to be addressed in multiple ways using several methodological approaches (Hjalager, 2010). Some of the themes of innovation that have received patchy coverage include innovation processes in tourism enterprises, driving forces of innovation, innovation and economic performance (what type of innovation produces what type of results and in what kind of enterprises), technological innovations, diffusion of innovation, role of entrepreneurship, innovation policy issues, the nature of innovations in public tourism service provision, in destination management and governance, development of tourism innovation theories (Hjalager, 2010).

Tourism involvement demonstrates individual's participation in vacations, encompasses an individual's long-term attitudes toward tourism activities which in turn can influence an individual's behaviour over time e.g. sharing information, sharing experience, adjusting lifestyle, and spending more time in tourism-related activities (Yeh, 2013). Despite its significance, tourism involvement remains under-researched particularly with respect to work engagement and job satisfaction among frontline hotel employees. Therefore, it is necessary for hospitality firms to develop an understanding of the conditions that contribute to work engagement and job satisfaction as the engaged and satisfied employees can enhance service quality (Yeh, 2013).

Through a critical review of literature over a 10-year period (2005 to 2014), Baum, Kralij, Robinson, and Solnet (2016) argued that tourism and hospitality HR aspect has not only been under-researched but also 'suffers from piecemeal approaches at topic, analytical, theoretical, and methods levels' (p.1). For advancing workforce theory, policy and practice, Baum et al. (2016, p. 18) proposed the following platform for future workforce research that includes studies which:

- *draw explicitly on their social science discipline origins and clearly articulate their methodological and theoretical contributions to social science;*
- *extend beyond a 'problem solving' managerial perspective on workforce research and seek to engage with explanation as a starting point in seeking change;*
- *investigate discourses of work and how tourism employment perpetuates or challenges these narratives;*
- *enunciate a just and sustainable glocal vision for tourism and its co-workers.*

Through a review of strategic HRM literature, Madera, Dawson, Guchait, and Belarmino (2017) identified the research gaps in the hospitality and tourism sector. Their review suggests that there are very few studies which deal with the relationship between strategic HRM and financial measures of firm performance. Therefore, Madera et al. (2017) presented a conceptual model for future research linking HRM strategy with first level of outcomes (employee measures) which is then linked with second level of outcomes (operational measures) which is then linked with the third level of outcomes (financial measures). Contextual variables proposed in their model are: national culture, legal contexts, economic contexts, educational contexts, technology, and leadership (Madera et al., 2017). Various components of HRM strategy proposed in the model are: individual HR practices, high-performance work systems, high commitment systems, high involvement systems, and high investment systems. Employee measures in the first level of outcomes include job satisfaction, organisational commitment, employee engagement, employee helping behaviours, employee skills, employee motivation, perceived organisational support, turnover intentions, and perceived fairness. Operational measures in the second level of outcomes include service speed, service quality, innovation, safety behaviours, customer service behaviours, customer satisfaction, labour productivity, creativity, workforce turnover, and customer loyalty. Financial measures in the third level outcomes include profit, revenues, sales, stock price, sales growth, return on invested capital, return on assets, market share, market return, net revenue per employee, cash-flow, and profit to earnings ratio (Madera et al., 2017, p. 59).

5. Conclusions

Based on a review of 45 hospitality related journal articles and 26 non-hospitality related journal articles, this study identified the various HR practices used in the hospitality and tourism industry. The study also identified a range of research gaps in the HR area in the context of hospitality and tourism industry for future research.

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