

EXPLORING THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF TALENT MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN GHANA

EXPLORANDO OS RESULTADOS POSITIVOS DA GESTÃO DE TALENTOS: UM ESTUDO DE CASO DO SETOR DE HOSPITALIDADE EM GANA

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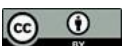
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Abstract

The study sought to find out whether talent management has a positive impact on competitive advantage, sustainable employment and employee retention in the hospitality industry of Ghana. The study utilised the triangulation mixed method technique which involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data and analysing to improve the validity and reliability of the findings. Observation and online interviews were conducted to elicit responses to the research questions from fifteen participants purposively selected from the Kumasi Metropolis and the Bolgatanga Municipality. Although the research revealed that talent management is not widely practiced in the hospitality industry in Ghana, majority of the respondents indicated that talent management in the hospitality industry could significantly improve employee retention, enhance competitiveness and sustainable employment. It has been observed that the hospitality industry in Ghana is dominated by micro, small and medium size enterprises which cannot afford the services of highly skilled personnel. For operators in the hospitality industry to be able to benefit from talent management, the study recommended that the operators in the industry should collaborate and engage the services of external consultants to train and manage their personnel.

Resumo

O estudo procurou descobrir se a gestão de talentos tem um impacto positivo na vantagem competitiva, no emprego sustentável e na retenção de funcionários no setor hoteleiro do Gana. O estudo utilizou a técnica de método misto de triangulação, que envolve a coleta de dados quantitativos e qualitativos e a análise para melhorar a validade e a confiabilidade dos resultados. Foram realizadas observações e entrevistas online para obter respostas às questões de pesquisa de quinze participantes selecionados propositadamente da metrópole de Kumasi e do município de Bolgatanga. Embora a pesquisa tenha revelado que a gestão de talentos não é amplamente praticada no setor hoteleiro do Gana, a maioria dos entrevistados indicou que a gestão de talentos no setor hoteleiro poderia melhorar significativamente a retenção de funcionários, aumentar a competitividade e o emprego sustentável. Observou-se que o setor hoteleiro em Gana é dominado por micro, pequenas e médias empresas que não podem pagar pelos serviços de pessoal altamente qualificado. Para que os operadores do setor hoteleiro possam se beneficiar da gestão de talentos, o estudo recomendou que os operadores do setor colaborem e contratem os serviços de consultores externos para treinar e gerenciar seu pessoal.



Keywords: Competitive Advantage. Employee Retention. Hospitality Industry. Sustainable Employment. Talent Management.

Palavras-chave: *Vantagem Competitiva. Retenção de Funcionários. Setor Hoteleiro. Emprego Sustentável. Gestão de Talentos.*

1 INTRODUCTION

The emerging advancement in technology coupled with a fast increase in population and mobility of labour have significantly affected growth in the hospitality industry (Karunathilaka. 2020). Talent management is a contemporary approach to human resource management aimed at accomplishing organisational goals (Karunathilaka. 2020). However, some organisations are yet to fully embrace talent management as a strategy towards achieving their objectives (Collings. 2015). A number of factors including scarcity of skilled labour, high labour turnover and globalisation have made it difficult for some business in the hospitality industry to thrive (Hejase, Hejase, Mikdashi, & Farhat Bazeih. 2016). Aside the Baby Boomers and the Generation X, most of whom have either retired or are near retirement, the Millennials and the Generation Z form the majority of the current workforce who keep hopping from job to job like nomads looking for greener pastures (McCollum & Na'Desh. 2015; Nolan. 2015). This situation has been exacerbated by globalisation and the ease with which skilled and talented staff are able to move from one country to another in search for better opportunities (Collings. 2015; McDonnell et al.. 2017).

Of late, local and international demand for competent staff in the hospitality industry is compelling managers to adopt talent management as a means of developing the skills and competencies of their staff (Muntean. 2014). A study by Pricewaterhousecoopers in 2014, confirmed that a lot of businesses in the hospitality industry worldwide are experiencing acute shortage of skilled staff, high labour turnover and the reluctance of the younger generation to take up employment in the industry (Pricewaterhousecoopers. 2014). The International Labour Organisation conducted a study on labour turnover in the hospitality industry and reported that the rate stood at 29% (ILO Report. 2017). The report further stated that 13% out of 29% of the turnover were due to either lack of or inadequate prospects for career progression in the hospitality industry. Apart from these, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) conducted a

research and reported that the hospitality industry globally generated 9.9% of job opportunities in 2017 and predicted that vacancies will rise to 11.6% in 2028 (WTTC. 2018). In the mist of these challenges and coupled with the refusal of some businesses in the industry to adopt technological innovations. talent management has become very necessary (Akanpaadgi. Kuuyelleh & Alqahtani. 2024). For the businesses operating in the hospitality industry to derive competitive advantage. have sustainable employment and maintain existing staff; they must embrace talent management as a means of addressing the challenges in the sector (Omae. 2020). The situation is even dire in the hotel and other service industries in Ghana where there has not been much improvement in service delivery in the last few years.

Although not much is known about talent management in many organisations. in recent times it is fast gaining grounds and gathering momentum in the practice of labour management (Holland. 2017). To a large extent the success of businesses in the hospitality industry depends on the skills. attitudes and physical appearance of staff (Mohammed. 2017). The current challenges in the hospitality industry may be due to the inability to effectively manage talent. Businesses in the hospitality industry with the right calibre of employees have a greater chance of success over their counterparts who lack such staff (Obedgiu. Sang & Lagat. 2023).

Many studies have been carried out about talent management and performance in the hospitality industry in Ghana (Appaw-Agbola. 2016; Amoako. 2018; Asamoah & Owusu-Acheampong. 2016; Kunu. Mahama. Boahen & Denu. 2017; Anlesinya. Amponsa-Tawiah & Dartey-Baah. 2019a; Anlesinya. Dartey-Baah & Amponsah-Tawiah. 2019b and Akanpaadgi *et al.*. 2024). However. none of them assessed how talent management can have a positive influence on sustainable employment. employee retention and competitive advantage in the hospitality industry in Ghana. This study therefore. seeks to examine the positive outcomes of talent management in terms of competitive advantage. sustainable employment and employee retention in the hospitality industry in Ghana.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Notwithstanding widespread research in talent management as a concept, there is yet to be a generally accepted definition for talent management (Ansar & Baloch, 2018). Chung & D'Annunzio (2018:17) defined talent management as “activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key talent which differentially contribute to the organisation’s sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents to ensure their persistent commitment to the organisation.” Another definition is the discovery, enticement, nurture, utilisation and retention of talented staff who are capable of delivering top-notch services to clients (Mahlahla, 2018). Even though there are several definitions of talent management by various authors, they are similar in context.

Talent management ensures that organisations are able to meet their current and future human resource requirements (Mahlahla, 2018). The extent to which managers are able to address talent-related issues in an organisation can determine whether talent management will result in service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty to be able to achieve a competitive advantage (Akanpaadgi *et al.*, 2024). Managers have a responsibility to attract the right calibre of employees and create an enabling work environment so as to aid the organisation to have a competitive edge over its rivals.

Various writers, professionals as well as managers have assigned different nomenclature to talent management depending on their perception and understanding. Names such as human capital management, human resource development, succession planning, and talent development have been ascribed to talent management (Garg & Rani, 2014). All these terminologies are a description of the kind of activities needed to provide the calibre of labour required by organisations to achieve their goals.

In order to broaden the scope of talent management, it is important to examine some of the theories of talent management which are relevant to the study (Yeswa & Ombui, 2019). The study focused on three main theories; Talent Based Theory, Resource-Based Theory and Human Capital Theory.

The Talent Based Theory posited that individual employees have talent which must be harnessed by human resource managers for the achievement of organisational goals. The theory requires organisations to create a congenial work environment for talented employees to excel through putting their skills to bare thereby helping to increase productivity (Sunanda. 2018). Organisations that have very good work environments are better able to harness the talents of their employees than those with poor working environment (Rukunga & Nzulwa. 2018). The Talent Based Theory stipulates that organisations must invest in their workforce so as to have a competitive advantage (Abdulkarim & Jainaba 2020).

The Resource-Based Theory stipulates that the natural and financial resources of an organisation should be complemented by high quality labour. The ability of an organisation to accomplish its stated objectives does not only depend on the natural and financial resources but the availability of talented staff to efficiently turn these resources into well cherished goods and services (Rabbi. Ahad. Kousar & Ali. 2015). Abioro. Olabisi. Onigbinde & Adedeji (2020:50) identified four qualities of employees; “valuable. rare. inimitable and non-substitutable” (VRIN) that enable organisations to have a competitive edge over their rivals. These qualities of employees inspire critical thinking. creativity and innovation.

Becker (1964) developed the human capital theory which classified labour as the most important factor of production without which nothing can be achieved in an organisation. The productive capacity of an organisation depends to a large extent on the of human resource working for the organisation and their ability to adjust to challenging circumstances (Yeswa & Ombui. 2019). One distinguishing feature about the human capital theory is its focus on identifying. attracting. developing and maintaining the skills of employees and channelling it towards achieving organisational goals (Mahlahla. 2018).

There is a presumption in human resource management practice that managers will always try to match the expectations of employees with the goals of the organisation (Chandramohan & Santhanalaxmi. 2019). However. talent management goes beyond hiring of talented employees. it involves nurturing. mentoring and full integration of employees in order to establish an ecosystem for the effective performance of organisational tasks (Ali. Lei & Hussain. 2017). The work environment must also be one that facilitates smooth workflow devoid of conflict and rancour in order to unleash the

productive capacity of employees Abioro, Olabisi, Onigbinde & Adedeji (2020). There is a very high possibility that the hospitality industry in Ghana will be significantly transformed if it is able to fully embrace talent management.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research adopted the triangulation mixed method research technique to collect both quantitative and qualitative data for the analysis. The triangulation mixed method research approach is suitable for inductive exploratory research which is focused on seeking new insights into a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Triangulation mixed method provides an elaborate comprehension of the subject being examined due to its ability to combine quantitative and qualitative data. This approach creates an avenue for the researcher to have a holistic view and understanding of the subject through observation and interactions with participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data for the study came from secondary and primary sources. The secondary data was gathered from journal publications, textbooks and reports while the primary data for the study was collected through structured interviews. The study applied convenience purposive non-probability sampling technique to select fifteen participants; ten from the Kumasi Metropolis and five from the Bolgatanga Municipality; for the interviews. The study targeted managers and supervisors of hotels located within the Kumasi Metropolis and the Bolgatanga Municipality. Tables and thematic analysis were used to analyse the data obtained from the participants. The researchers replaced the names of the participants with numbers preceded by the letter P which stands for “Participant” to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. All quotations were made verbatim without corrections to errors in the statements. Only statements which are relevant to the research were quoted.

The structured interviews were conducted under the following four thematic areas:

Theme 1 – Examined participants’ understanding of talent management in the hospitality industry in Ghana

Theme 2 – Examined talent management as a source of competitive advantage for the hospitality industry in Ghana.

Theme 3 – Examine talent management as a source of sustainable employment for the hotel industry in Ghana

Theme 4 – Examine the extent to which talent management can ensure high employee retention in the hospitality industry in Ghana.

4 FINDINGS

Sociodemographic data of participants

The study obtained the following sociodemographic data to ascertain the background of the participants which is very crucial in analysing their responses to the questions.

Table 1

Sociodemographic data of participants

Participant (P)	Gender	Age	Qualification	Years of Service	Position
P1	Female	29	Senior High School	6	Supervisor
P2	Male	37	Masters	3	Manager
P3	Male	32	1st Degree	8	Manager
P4	Female	35	1st Degree	5	Manager
P5	Male	26	Senior High School	2	Supervisor
P6	Male	38	1st Degree	4	Supervisor
P7	Male	38	1st Degree	6	Senior supervisor
P8	Male	42	Masters	15	Owner-Manager
P9	Female	31	1st Degree	6	Manager
P10	Male	37	1st Degree	7	Manager
P11	Male	39	Masters	6	Owner-Manager
P12	Male	31	1st Degree	5	Supervisor
P13	Male	38	1 st Degree	4	Manager
P14	Male	27	Senior High School	8	Manager
P15	Female	24	Senior High School	5	Manager

Gender: The female respondents are four (4) while the male respondents are eleven (11) representing 27% and 73% of the participants respectively. Age group: Only one (1) participant was within the age group of 18 – 24 constituting 6% of the sample. Five (5) respondents fell within the age group of 25 – 31 years which represents 34% of the participants. Seven (7) of the respondents were within the age group of 32 – 38 which constitutes 47% of the participants. Two (2) of the participants were within the age group of 39 – 45 representing 13% of the respondents. Educational qualification: Eight (8) of

the respondents are first degree holders comprising 53% of the interviewees. Those with master's qualifications are three (3) representing 20% of the interviewees. The Senior High School leavers are four (4) representing 27% of the participants. Work experience: Three categories of years of experience were considered. The first range is from 1– 5 years which had seven (7) respondents representing 47% of the participants. The second category of years of experience is 6 – 10 which also had seven (7) representing 47% of the respondents. Only one (1) participant representing 6% had work experience ranging from 11 – 15 years. Positions: Two (2) main positions were identified; supervisor and manager. Five (5) of the respondents representing 34% were supervisors with one of them being a senior supervisor. The manager position had ten (10) respondents representing 66% with two being owner-managers.

Theme 1 Understanding of talent management

The study tried to find out if participants understood what talent management is; and here are what some participants stated:

“..... is how hotels consciously put in effort to improve the skills and abilities of their employees to be able to deliver on their assigned roles more effectively”. P1

“..... involves keeping the skills and knowledge of employees at breast with current trends in order for them to effectively do their assigned tasks well to improve the organisations performance.” P4

“..... refers to making sure that the right people are in the right roles. motivated. skilled and growing so that the company can succeed.” P12

“..... focuses on identifying and developing individual potential.” P14

“..... is the ability to recruit. train. maintain employees as well as improve the way and manner said employees work in one's establishment.” P15

Theme 2 Talent management and competitive advantage

The research sought to find out from the participants their understanding of how talent management could boost competitive advantage in the industry. Their responses under this theme were categorised into three; service quality. customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

4.1 Service quality

“The hotel trains the employees on how to interact and talk with clients. how to present themselves neatly.” P1

“..... will also do things in a professional way.” P2

“ employees through talent management will provide better and quality services which will attract more customers” P5

“..... individual establishments are able to serve customers better and create a better experience.” P15

Customer satisfaction

“ Employees with better talents will work to the satisfaction of clients as they are able to treat them better to their liking” P6

Customer loyalty

“..... the employees will be more able to provide better services which will please your clients more and by that lead more clients to your hotel.” P1

“ will make them acquire and maintain more customers than their competitors.” P2

“ will make the hotel attract more customers than its competitors due to the customer satisfaction.” P6

Theme 3 Talent management and sustainable employment

This theme examined talent management as a means of sustainable employment for the hotel industry in Ghana. The following statements which appear to corroborate this notion were received from the participants:

“..... will make them to have sustainable employment than those who have not had their talent managed or improved.” P1

“..... will not have any fear in terms of the security of their jobs because they possess the required talents or skills to perform their task.” P2

“..... cannot be done away with and therefore leading to sustainable employment for the talent.” P3

“Well trained employees/talents in the hotel industry will be better preferred and have better opportunities to work longer and receive better conditions of service than those who are not.” P6

“Talented employees will always stand a better chance to receive better employment opportunities than untalented ones.” P7

“..... increasing productivity of staff which will in turn lead to increase in output ...” P11

“Employee engagement and retention ...” P12

“..... create long-term career by offering clear advancement paths. prioritising employee wellbeing” P14

“..... employees fit better and perform better and for longer periods in their roles.” P15

Theme 4 Talent management and employee retention

Theme 4 teased out what can be done to ensue that an operator in the hospitality industry is can have a prolonged tenure of staff.

“The little training received here has helped employees to be able to do their jobs better and they are happy working here.” P1

“..... creating experienced and satisfied employees.” P4

“..... hotel retains the workforce that has become talented.” P6

“..... training ... recognition. positive work environment. competitive compensation & benefits. work-life balance.” P12

“..... offering employees competitive pay and benefits. creating a good culture toward your employees provide clear path for career growth and development through training programs.” P13

“Providing competitive compensation and benefits. regularly expressing appreciation through acknowledgements and bonuses. creating a welcoming on boarding experience to promote belonging.” P14

5 DISCUSSION

The sociodemographic data of the participants show that only four (4) out of the fifteen (15) participants selected for the interview were females. The study purposively targeted senior staff. but unfortunately not many females were in that category to be selected for the interview even though it was observed that females are the majority of the employees in the hospitality industry. The study also found out that fourteen (14) out

of the fifteen (15) participants were under the age forty (40) which represents the most active labour force. This confirms the fact that the Millennials and the Generation Z constitute the majority of the current labour force in the hospitality industry in Ghana (McCollum & Na'Desh. 2015). With regards to the qualifications of participants, the study discovered that out of the fifteen (15) respondents, eleven (11) had at least a first degree which shows that there is some level of talent in the industry. Surprisingly, none of the participants had up to ten (10) years' work experience in the industry except one (1) which suggests that there is a high attrition rate in the industry as confirmed by the ILO Report (2017).

With regards to whether the respondents understood what talent management entails, the study discovered that with the exception of two (2) respondents the rest had knowledge about talent management. Respondents 1 and 4 stated that "*Talent management is how hotels consciously put in effort to improve the skills and abilities of their employees to be able to deliver on their assigned roles more effectively*"; and "*Talent management involves keeping the skills and knowledge of employees at breast with current trends in order for them to effectively do their assigned tasks well to improve the organisations performance*" respectively. Others stated that it is the recruitment, development, deployment, utilisation and retention of staff for the accomplishment of strategic objectives. These statements by the participants correspond with the definition that talent management involves equipping employees with certain skills and competencies to be able to carry out their duties properly (Anlesinya et al., 2019a). This notion presume that talent management is not entirely new to the hospitality industry in Ghana.

As to whether talent management in the hospitality can result in a competitive advantage, the study findings revealed that talent management in the hospitality industry can contribute to an enterprise having a competitive edge over its rivals. This is because the hospitality industry is service-based and service providers need to provide special services to retain existing customers and attract new ones. Some of the respondents admitted that talented employees deliver quality services which leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty which confirms the assertion by Akanpaadgi *et al.* (2024) that well motivated employees can result in service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. One of the participants stated that "*..... employees through talent*

management will provide better and quality services which will attract more customers” P5. Another participant stated that “..... will make the hotel attract more customers than its competitors due to the customer satisfaction” P6. Based on the statements from these respondents, it means that the operators in the hospitality industry are aware that if they are able to properly develop the skills of their employees, they will be able to provide efficient services in order to gain competitive advantage over their competitors.

On the issue of whether talent management can result in sustainable employment, most of the participants agreed that talent management can lead to sustainable employment. The responses from the participants undoubtedly indicate that managers and supervisors in the hospitality industry have a thorough understanding of the important role of talent management towards creating sustainable employment. Statements by participants corroborating this include *“talent management cannot be done away with and therefore leading to sustainable employment for the talent” P3; “well trained employees/talents in the hotel industry will be better preferred and have better opportunities to work longer and receive better conditions of service than those who are not” P6; and “talented employees will always stand a better chance to receive better employment opportunities than untalented ones” P7. These findings are supported by the Resource-based Theory which stipulates that organisational success does not only depend on financial and physical resources but also depends on the availability of the right calibre of labour (Rabbi *et al.*, 2015). This notion is also buttressed by the Human Capital Theory which says the most important resource of every organisation is the human resource (Becker, 1964). Despite the widespread awareness by most of the managers and supervisors in the hospitality industry that talent management can create sustainable employment, they appear not to have deliberate policies aimed at promoting talent management.*

Another important factor was whether talent management could contribute to employee retention. An organisation will usually like to retain its talented employees who are contributing to its development and growth. Apart from the difficult in getting such employees to recruit, it is also expensive to recruit and retain them. When participants were asked how they could retain talented staff, the following responses were received: *“..... the little training received here has helped employees to be able to do their jobs*

better and they are happy working here” P1. “..... training recognition. positive work environment. competitive compensation and benefits. work-life balance.” P12. “..... offering employees competitive pay and benefits. creating a good culture toward your employees provide clear path for career growth and development through training programs.” P13. “Providing competitive compensation and benefits. regularly expressing appreciation through acknowledgements and bonuses. creating a welcoming on boarding experience to promote belonging.” P14. The responses obtained from the participants suggest that deliberate attempts are being made in the hospitality industry in Ghana to retain talented staff. This is consistent with the assertion by (Ali *et al.*, 2017) that organisations should lay much emphasis on on-boarding, developing and retaining newly engaged staff for the accomplishment of their strategic objectives.

From the analysis of the findings, there is a presumption that talent management has a positive impact on sustainable employment, competitive advantage and employee retention. Hence the importance of the psychological well-being of employees and staff development on productivity in the hospitality industry in Ghana cannot be overemphasised.

6 CONCLUSION

The study set out to establish whether talent management has concomitant effects on competitive advantage, sustainable employment and employee retention. Even though the research did not provide empirical evidence to suggest that talent management is intensively practiced in the hospitality industry in Ghana, the participants confirmed the importance of talent management in ensuring sustainable employment. The participants also corroborated the notion that when talented staff are given adequate training on the job, they are more likely to remain with the same organisation for a while due to job satisfaction. Furthermore, the research affirmed that competitive advantage can be achieved through the development of appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes of employees such that they are able to render quality services to customers in order to achieve customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, referrals and repeat business.

Perhaps the lack of deliberate policies on talent management in the hospitality industry is due to the fact that the industry in Ghana is dominated by micro, small and

medium size enterprises which cannot afford the services of highly skilled personnel. Nevertheless, they can collaborate and utilise the services of external management consultants to derive benefits from talent management. Most of the tertiary education institutions in Ghana have departments which offer courses in hotelier, catering and tourism management at undergraduate and graduate levels; and churn out thousands of graduates every year. Apart from the operators in the hospitality industry employing such talents, they can also arrange with the institutions to organise tailor made training programmes for their staff as part of their continuous professional development. A collaboration between the various operators in the hospitality industry in Ghana towards organising training workshops, seminars and conferences will not only improve the competencies of their staff but also help them to sustain their businesses.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The study recommends further studies into the engagement of external management consultants for talent management in the hospitality industry in Ghana.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors hereby declare that there is no conflict of interest with regards to the research and publication of this manuscript.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The study received ethical approval on the 28th of April, 2021 from Stadio Ethics Review Committee of the Southern Business School in South Africa.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Participants were made aware that by accepting to participate in the study, they have given their consent to their data being analysed and published. They were also informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. All responses were anonymous.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Visualisation and data collection Joshua Nabre; Data analysis and writing of draft manuscript Emmanuel Akanpaadgi; review and editing Ernest Kumi.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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