

Employee Competencies Relationship Model in Hospitality: A Post COVID-19 Study

Employee Competencies Relationship Model

¹Himani Arora, ²Dr. Sunil Kumar

¹Research Scholar, Mittal School of Buisness
Lovely Professional University
Phagwara, India

Himani.arora@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Mittal School of Buisness
Lovely Professional University
Phagwara, India
sunil23121984@gmail.com

Abstract— Orientation: Employee competencies are skills and behaviours laid down for an employee to meet the expectations of an organization. The paper focused on Employee competencies should be understand in a way that can be benefitted for the hospitality industry. The present study aims to analyze the employee competencies relationship model. Cases from various continents have studied how employee competencies played an important role in the hospitality sector during and after the COVID pandemic. The data was collected through structured interviews of 24 job profiles in the Hospitality sector frontline employees. MAXQDA software tool is used for code development and model testing. The study's findings infer that luxury hotel employees' self-competency and team competency are the most significant competencies. At the same time, knowledge competency presents a non-significant relationship with other competencies. Practical/managerial implications: This research focuses on specific competencies of customer-facing employees during COVID-19 service stress and the factors important for individual and team productivity. Meeting KPIs (key performance indicators) for achieving consistency in the luxury brand promise in luxury hospitality.

Keywords- employee competencies; Luxury hotels; Front office employees; COVID-19

I. INTRODUCTION

The luxury hotel industry epitomizes the highest standards of service excellence. This hospitality business model heavily relies on its employees' competencies and productivity to consistently deliver exceptional service in the luxury hotel sector (Otoo & Mishra, 2018). In today's fiercely competitive business landscape, employee competencies and their strategic importance in human resource management cannot be ignored. These competencies are crucial in guiding the organization towards increased efficiency and success (Bharwani & Talib, 2017).

Furthermore, the trifecta of cost, time, and effort in people management necessitates the development of firm-level capabilities to drive employee training and foster the application of skills and competencies. Employee competencies become vital differentiators in achieving excellence in luxury service (Kukanja & Planinc, 2019). Luxury hotels need employee and business competencies to encompass all aspects of the business, ensuring the consistent delivery of high-quality service and cultivating a strong corporate reputation (Ioranta, 2019).

Marneros et al. (2020) posited that the resource-based view (RBV) theory describes an employee's ability to create memorable experiences for guests in service encounters consistently necessitates the application of the competency model. This theory relies on effective human resources (HR) processes, HR planning, and HR policies to cultivate and mould talent within the workforce, thereby gaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace. A crucial concern for HR managers is aligning employee competencies with productivity and output to enhance and expand their organization's leadership

and management (O'Reilly, 2015). However, the relationship between competencies and their impact on improvement and overall organizational effectiveness remains an area requiring further exploration.

Previous studies have demonstrated the contribution of employee competencies to employee productivity across various sectors. In the face of dynamic internal organizational changes and external market environments, workforce skills, knowledge, attitudes, and capabilities play a pivotal role, necessitating the presence of employee competencies to achieve organizational efficiency (Ferrary, 2015; Bharawani & Mathews, 2016; Saad & Mayouf, 2018; Otto, 2019; Cavaliere et al., 2021). In industries such as manufacturing, research and development, information technology (Reddypogu et al., 2016), banking, and insurance services (Salman et al., 2020), employee competencies have become irreplaceable factors and strong predictors for achieving higher levels of employee productivity, organizational performance, and efficiency.

For the Indian luxury hotel industry, which prides itself on providing high-quality services to its guests, identifying and maintaining employee competencies to drive organizational efficiency are of utmost importance (Sanjeev & Birdie, 2019). Shamim (2018) elucidated that competencies within the hospitality industry vary based on sector-specific aspects, which shape both the job profile and the job situation. From a managerial and organizational standpoint, competency encompasses a set of interconnected employee performances at individual and team levels. These competencies aid in tackling the challenges presented by the job situation, ultimately resulting

in constructive or detrimental feedback that guides the improvement of performance competencies.

According to Salman, Ganie & Saleem (2020), individual competencies, which define personal performance, are influenced by internal or external training programs. These training inputs assist individuals in generating outputs that align with the quality expectations outlined by the Human Resources Department (HRD). The output of competency directly correlates with employee performance, whether in a team or as an individual, thereby greatly assisting human resource managers in evaluating employee performance. This connection between the required competencies for a given job description and the performance output of an individual serves as a measure of the effectiveness of the training provided, the capabilities of the employee, and the demonstration of planning and organizing skills within the work procedure (Giousmpasoglou, Marinakou & Zopiatis, 2021).

The hospitality industry is facing a downgrade post covid 19. In recent times it has started functioning at a better pace. Xu et al. (2023) stated that the new normal post covid 19 crisis had offered suggestions for the hospitality industry. The results show that technology and soft competencies such as creativity, self-confidence/positivity, self-care/wellness, critical thinking, leadership, and teamwork play an important role in the success of individuals and industries.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dalvi (2019) provided a comprehensive definition of employee competency as a cohesive amalgamation of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that profoundly influence task performance and output while upholding a sense of responsibility towards the job per accepted standards. Ganie and Saleem (2018) argued that competencies are developed through both on-the-job and off-the-job training, which enhance the employee's performance to a finer degree, thereby demonstrating the efficacy of their value. Bhardwaj (2013) defined competency as a blend of skills and knowledge that employees require to attain the desired organizational goals, encompassing core self-competency, communication competency, and team competency as additional dimensions. Hellriegel and Slocum (2011) further expanded the concept by including ethical competency, diversity competencies, cross-cultural competency, and change competency, in addition to the key competencies. Specifically, within the hospitality industry, Hai-Yan and Baum (2006) outlined the crucial competencies necessary for success in hospitality occupations. Jauhari's (2006) research findings emphasized that competencies are pivotal drivers of workforce output in strategic HRM practices within organizational contexts. Bharwani and Jauhari (2013) highlighted how creating memorable customer experiences in the hospitality sector contributes to developing hospitality intelligence. Recognizing the significance of competencies in service delivery within the hospitality environment, Lam et al. (2021) emphasized that the ability to create unforgettable experiential encounters with customers profoundly impacts their emotions, surpassing the effectiveness of traditional hospitality advertisements. Furthermore, in the realm of luxury hospitality services, Koc (2020) emphasized that the competencies possessed by hospitality employees in establishing and maintaining host-guest service encounters in cross-cultural environments become pivotal in distinguishing different hotel categories and ultimately securing a competitive advantage for luxury brands.

Analytical and robust decision-making in employee competencies has gained global attention across various business contexts. It is widely accepted that employee output and performance are majorly determined by their competencies, which makes it essential to focus on this aspect (Holden et al., 2020). Dalgic & Akgunduz (2022) describe it as an inward-looking strategy, where talent is only deemed productive when end-users are satisfied with the frontline employees' service.

Rabiul et al. (2023) examine the leaders' communication competency to different leadership styles and how it positively impacts work engagement. Communication competency plays an important role in front office staff and leadership roles for the further growth of an employee at the next level.

Moreover, HR measures employees' hours and total input in a service environment (output). However, qualitatively, it is equally important to consider the employee's dedication and motivation to tasks (Kaliyamoorthy et al., 2018). Job analysis shows that tasks can vary in complexity and require matching competencies to ensure the person-environment fit for hotel employees (Lee et al., 2017; Priyangika et al., 2020).

Self-competencies such as the ability to adjust to change quickly, show readiness to learn, develop oneself and the team, initiate action, show endurance and receptiveness, manage self-discipline, self-determination, and self-esteem, form a cluster of performance competencies that impact trust in luxury guests (Sitthiwarongchai, 2017). In the hotel industry, managing self with HR programs follows the 'employee first' policy before the 'customer first' dimension that links competency and service quality. Competencies are critical for the long-term employability factor of employees. Additionally, employee competencies are necessary for fulfilling a positive organizational commitment through productivity target achievements (Cerf, 2017; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2019).

Manuti et al. (2015) defined organizational performance as the cumulative result of continuous learning that shapes talent management within the workforce. This strategic process determines the level of success by envisioning future organizational needs. Achieving this requires ongoing learning and unlearning in both formal and informal settings within the workplace, which cultivates strategic competencies (Venegas et al., 2017). Efficiently driving processes and activities to attain and manage service innovation in redefining luxury experiences for guests (Beshr & Hossan, 2018) necessitates dimensions such as team collaboration and emotional intelligence (Huang et al., 2019), creativity among empowered employees (Andi Kele, 2020), as well as creativity and innovation within hotel sector employees (Widodo, 2021).

Human resource management (HRM) practices that guide employee competencies and leadership mentoring and coaching contribute to overall guest satisfaction. However, customer needs and expectations continuously evolve, necessitating a strategic approach to competency building in the luxury hotel sector to meet business goals (Argus & Samson, 2021). From a holistic and process-oriented perspective, interpersonal interactional competencies within hospitality organizations are taught in-house to management trainees. This training encompasses the technical aspects of the job, the personal characteristics of individuals, and the cultivation of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence (Vanka et al., 2020). Empowerment, creativity, innovation, and courteousness are vital in providing professional services that enhance the guest experience. However, there remains a gap in the academic

literature regarding how these different employee competencies are interconnected within this research context, which ultimately influences service quality in luxury hotel guest-host encounters and organizational efficiency.

Communication competency takes precedence in the hospitality business, as customers are treated as the highest priority. It is closely followed by the ability to manage guests and the knowledge required to carry out job responsibilities. Effective communication encompasses interactions with colleagues and the overall business. Since front office employees have direct customer interactions, physical appearance and excellent communication skills are crucial. Knowledge competency also plays a significant role in job roles within the hospitality sector, particularly front-office employees who must respond promptly to customer inquiries (Marneros et al., 2020).

Dolansinski and Reynolds (2019) proposed that relational competency signifies the interdependence between two individuals. In the hospitality sector, effective collaboration among departments is crucial for the smooth functioning of operations and for providing a satisfactory customer experience. Consequently, individuals must possess relational competence.

Within the hospitality sector, self-competency, change, and team competency are essential factors influencing individuals, teams, and the entire organization (Otoo, 2019). Self-competency refers to the development of personal and professional skills by individuals. Change competency involves the expectation that front-office employees can adapt to industry requirements. Team competency involves effective collaboration within a team for day-to-day operations.

In the hotel industry, front-office employees are pivotal in ensuring customer satisfaction. Therefore, customer satisfaction competency and cross-cultural competency are of paramount importance. Staff members must be able to adapt to the cultural backgrounds of customers, address their queries and concerns, and ensure a delightful experience (Yang et al., 2020). Additionally, employee commitment competency is crucial in controlling turnover within hotels. Employee and organizational commitment play equally significant roles in retaining and managing front-office employees' Performance (Ali et al., 2022).

Recent studies have shed light on the psychological impacts hospitality service staff face worldwide. These include turnover intent, job insecurity, and organizational resilience (Bufquin et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2021; Vo-Thanh et al., 2021; Ngoc Su et al., 2021). Consequently, enhancing the competencies of individuals becomes even more critical to overcoming these impacts.

III. CASE STUDIES ON EMPLOYEE COMPETENCIES FROM DIFFERENT CONTINENTS

A. *Asia*

A qualitative research to interview 16 informants from 3 different types of hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand, including 3 Thai- small luxury hotels, 3 Thai- medium-sized hotels chain, and two international hotels chains, was conducted to know the qualification requirements for hotel employees in Thailand after covid 19 pandemic (Promnil, 2021). The new HRM approaches can include organizational knowledge, appearance and grooming. Interpersonal skills are core competency required at all levels post covid 19 pandemic. As Thailand is a famous tourist destination, it is more important to maintain the standards

required by the Hospitality sector and the development of individual competencies is required.

B. *North America:*

Dixon & Jovanovska (2022) conducted a two-day DACUM workshop for frontline customer service representatives across North Central Idaho's hospitality industry to identify competencies post-COVID-19 by developing a competency profile chart. Participants represented both genders and had a varied number of work experiences. The results showed that integrating competency profiles with the school curriculum will enhance frontline employees' general knowledge, skills and attitude, which will help them develop a career in this sector. Frontline Customer Service Representatives play a vital role in customer service competency, which can increase customer satisfaction and service quality. The latter focuses on behavioural requirements such as communication and decision-making as an integral part of their job.

C. *Africa*

Mousa et al. (2022) stated through a qualitative study conducted semi-structured interviews on 30 employee's four-star hotel in Sharm El-Sheikh (Egypt) who worked mainly in reservations, front desk, and event management focused on customer interaction employees aimed to analyze the extent of Talent management practices post covid 19 pandemic found that talent management approach in Egypt is unstable post COVID-19. The hospitality industry needs to adapt competencies to boost employee skills and recognize the value of knowledge. Multitasking skills can be an important competency and development of change competence as per COVID-19 to enrich customer service experience. The three major implications focused on adopting an inclusive talent management approach, mental health since many lost their loved ones and identifying skills they need to sustain in the hospitality sector.

D. *Europe*

A survey of 19 four- and five-star hotel workers in the Historic Centre of Porto (HCP) compared confidence in and perceived need to reinforce soft and hard skills among hospitality workers before and after the lockdown. The different competencies studied were Linguistic competencies, Digital competencies, Communicational competencies, Interpersonal relationship competencies, Conflict management competencies, Teamwork competencies, Flexibility and adaptability competencies, Specific competencies of the work area and others. The workers understand the importance of hard and soft skills but must improve their soft skills. The employees who showed teamwork, adaptation, interpersonal relationships, and flexibility as core competencies tend to be more confident and know the need to develop them in the context of post covid 19 pandemic. (Magalhães et al., 2022).

E. *Australia*

A study was conducted on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) workers (demographics: gender, age, educational qualification/s, country of birth, length of time living in Australia, current migration status) in hotels in Australia during Covid-19 to investigate factors influencing career optimism for training and development of hospitality sector employees Manoharan et al. (2021). Job-related competencies such as knowledge, qualification and experience, psychological resources and Spirituality and faith play vital roles in the career

optimism of an individual. Hence, knowledge, skills, and experience are important when recruiting hospitality workers. Interviews were semi-structured with migrants employed in the hospitality sector across Australian hotels.

F. South America

Park and Jonas (2021) studied virtual internship practices and adaptation changes required in the COVID-19 pandemic through structured interviews conducted in a college and site supervisors who managed interns from that program located in Washington DC through mixed approach using qualitative and quantitative methods, states that competencies play an important role in students learning and development in hospitality sector during virtual internships. The hospitality sector requires competence in domain content knowledge, skills, and attitude for success after covid 19. As organizations adapt to a new virtual environment, they may consider employees with experiential learning with a prerequisite set of competencies.

However, there are major challenges faced regarding competencies in the Hospitality sector, Nagar & Agarwal (2022) stated post covid 19 pandemic, retaining employees is the most difficult task in the hospitality sector. Competency development is directly related to turnover intention. While hiring employees, the focus can be deputing them as their competencies will help retain staff in the hospitality sector.

Competency management is part of HR processes rather than a business imperative, wherein employee performance is critical to the organization's success. Identification of competencies is difficult as respondent focuses on individual skills needed and not business requirements. Alignment of theoretical competency with the practical development of the organization is tough as theory linked to the practical concept has its challenges.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS (RQ):

RQ1: What are various employee competencies required in luxury hotels in India?

RQ2: What is the relationship among employee competencies in luxury hotels in India?

A. Methodology

A qualitative research approach is used to conduct the study. Braun & Clarke's model of thematic analysis was used to narrow down the stages of data following an inductive approach (Chandra & Shang, 2019). Therefore, to project the luxury component in the brand service offering to the hotel guests. The first line of themes that emerge is listing the competencies required for performing on the job, being employable, productive and meet guest requirements. In the first stage, the interview questions were asked, all transcripts were noted, and initial notes were taken. In the second stage, codes were generated as per responses by interviewers to begin data analysis. The first sets of codes were grouped into eight main competency themes in the third stage. Communication, Self, Relational, Team, Employee commitment, Knowledge, Cross-cultural, Customer Satisfaction, and Change competency. Categories were coloured to facilitate data analysis and draw a competencies relationship model. In the fourth step, while reviewing themes, a new sub-theme has been created under Change competency, namely Job engagement and Job commitment as the fifth step. Then further identified themes projected with a relationship model. Figure 1 presents the flow of the research paper.

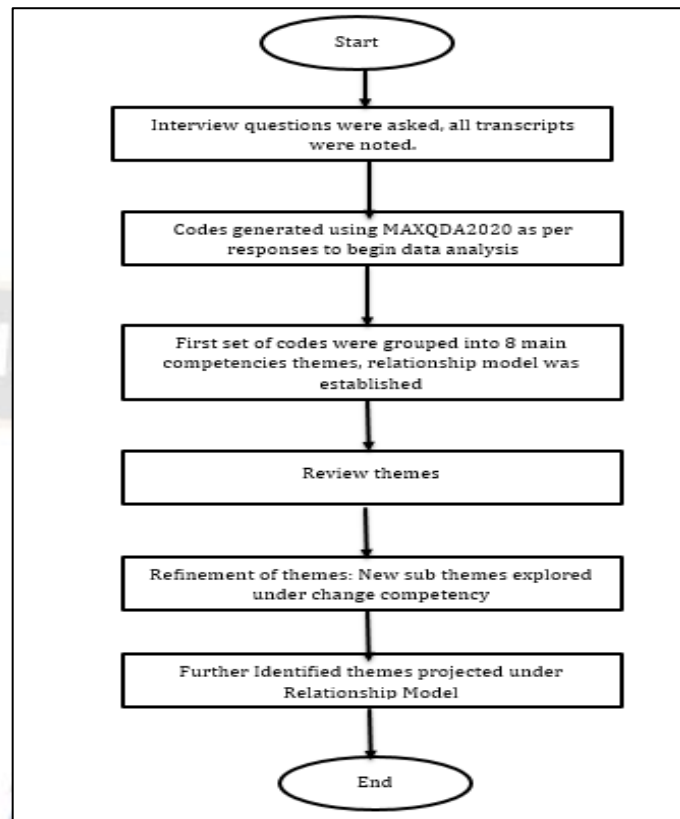


Fig 1: Flow of Research paper

B. Research tool

The research intends to differentiate the additional competencies hospitality employees need to possess in a luxury hotel perspective to be productive and contribute to specifics of hotel business service standards with organizational efficiency. This deep probing process requires exploring the subtle differences in capturing generic knowledge towards specificity for inductive research (Woo et al., 2017). The employee competencies help discover theory-building inductive processes in the research approach to address the above research question. The open-ended questionnaire used the dimensions such as:

- Relational competency - Do you need to extend and relate to other departments for service creation for hotel guests?
- Knowledge competency- How important is knowledge competency to you for service creation and optimization for luxury hotel guests?
- Customer satisfaction competency- How do you assess yourself in offering customer satisfaction?
- Cross-cultural competency- How important do you think cross-cultural competency is required for justifying frontline employee jobs in luxury hotels?
- Change competency- How vital is it for frontline employees to adopt change competency for luxury hotel operations?
- Communication competency – How interpersonal communication competencies are helping you in doing your job?

- Team competency – Do you agree that you need the right mix of team, motivation and support to apply the job knowledge to be competent in your task?
- Employee commitment competency - Do you think you are justifying your job and want to continue and should be in the frontline staff position?
- Self-competency- How do you access yourself in a front-office role in this luxury hotel?

C. Sample Area

India stands at rank 8th as per international tourist arrivals, with an annual growth rate of 2.8% in international tourist arrivals in 2019. As per the Ministry of Tourism 2019 report on the website total revenue earned by India from tourism is US\$30.058 Billion (211661 Crore) with 31.41 million tourists. India stands 10th in the number of domestic tourist visits in 2019 with 52220431 visitors and 8th in the number of foreign tourists in 2019 with 1101343 tourists. In India, there are a total of 105344 hotels which includes One-to-five-star, five-star deluxe and heritage hotels. While in the study area of Rajasthan has 115 hotels across the state, the largest number in India.

D. Respondent Profile

The paper subjects 24 different job profiles of hotel employees such as Resident Manager / Operations Manager, Concierge Front Office Manager, Assistant Front Office Manager, Duty Manager / Assistant Manager - Front Office, Front Office Supervisor, Front Office Assistants, Door Man, Bell Boys, Food & Beverage Manager, Assistant F&B Manager, F&B Executive, Captains, Stewards are selected using convenience sampling method upon their availability for the interview as the method of enquiry. The online interview questions confirmed the awareness and existence of competencies (list of codes) to make a confirmatory individual response in the luxury hotels context of India. The detailed respondent profile of various job profiles is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' profile (N=24)

Designation	Sex	Age	Qualification
Duty Manager	F	22	Graduate
Manager	M	28	Graduate
Guest Service Associate	F	21	Diploma
General Manager	M	38	Graduate
Operations Manager	M	35	Graduate
Guest relations executive	F	25	Graduate
Guest relations executive	F	26	Diploma
Supervisor	M	28	Graduate
Food and Beverage Manager	F	31	Graduate
Assistant F&B Manager	M	28	Graduate
Front Office Manager	M	32	Graduate
Food & Beverage Manager	M	36	Graduate
Front Office Manager	M	32	Graduate
F&B Executive	M	23	Diploma
Steward	M	27	Diploma
Captain	M	29	Graduate
Door Man/ Bell boy	M	31	Diploma
Front Office Assistants	F	22	Diploma
F&B Executive	M	24	Diploma
Front Office Assistants	M	22	Diploma
Concierge	F	21	Graduate
Front Office Assistants	M	21	Diploma
F&B Executive	M	24	Diploma
Front Office Assistants	F	23	Diploma

Source: Compiled by the author(s)

Note: M = Male, F = Female

Demographic analysis shows a mix of 67% males, 33% females, between the age group of (21-24) at 44%, (25-28) at 27%, (29-32) at 19% and the rest over 33 years of age. All of them are hotel management graduates or diploma holders, full-time at 91% and part-time employees at 9%, with residency status of Rajasthan at 53%, while the rest of the candidates are from the rest of India at 47%.

E. Qualitative analysis tool

Recorded interviews of the above job designation respondents are processed in MAXQDA qualitative software 2020. The interview questions used variables to explore the dimensions of Competencies (self, relational, knowledge, cross-cultural, change, customer satisfaction) based on communication competency. It was done to fine-tune the broad competencies required, situational factors to narrow down, and identify a few competencies required in luxury hotel employees.

V. FINDINGS/RESULTS

Thematic Relationship Analysis of Employee Competencies (Code Development)

The results of 24 interview transcripts of employees across luxury hotels in India bring the competencies in the business context service context. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that coding can be performed manually or through a software program. In this paper, MAXQDA 2020 is used to generate codes. Figure 2 represents the same.

RQ1: What are various employee competencies required in luxury hotels in India?

Each competency is given a coloured code generated by the system as per responses received by the interviewers. Self-competency got 24 responses, followed by Team competency in second with 23 responses and knowledge competency being the lowest with three responses.

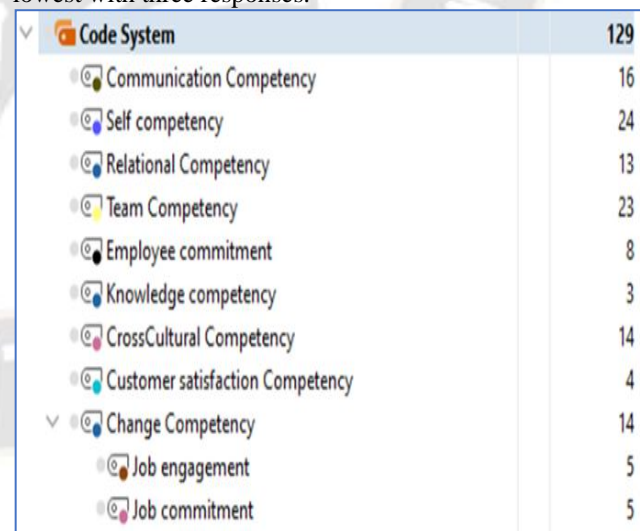


Figure 2. Code System of employee competencies

The qualitative data was compiled into a document, and data shows the combination of 410 frequently used divided over nine themes with two sub-themes of various competencies. Team competency is most important, with 77 repetitions. Self-competency is the second most frequently used competency, with 72 repetitions. Communication is third important, with 52 repetitions, followed by cross-cultural with 47 repetitions,

Relational competency (42), Employee commitment (33), Change competency (Job engagement 17, Job commitment 15) and Knowledge competency (0) in employee competencies relationship model

RQ2: What is the relationship among employee competencies in luxury hotels in India?

The employee competencies relationship model is presented in Figure 4. The employees acknowledged that training and skill development has helped them reach a level where they can use their knowledge to achieve superior performance at individual and team-level productivity targets. Competencies of different types have been mediating the relationship between employee development and employee productivity to achieve service performance in luxury hotels. The perception of employee abilities and operational effectiveness impacting the hotel guest satisfaction depends on their individual skills to match any job description and their engagement in the job. They also needed to show commitment to prove team allegiance or department performance that extends the dimension of self-competency to team competencies adaptability. Almost all the frontline employees in the luxury hotels stated that post-training, passing the job eligibility test is necessary. To adhere to luxury brand-specific adaptation capabilities reflected in work output. They agreed that, univocally, it is a test of self-competency against meeting the employability standards of luxury hotels. It implies that most of the core competencies associated with self-competency to excel in the job, like communication competency and team competency, must be interlinked to succeed in task achievement.

However, to excel throughout, there is one practice that front office employees showed visibly. Relational competency using emotional quotient in a luxury hotel setting is key to achieving courteousness, and diplomacy depends on self, peers and supervisor inputs. It has been evident that productivity depends not on the self but the social relationships in the organizational work context. In a team and department setting, their responses showed evidence of relational competencies to be tested with higher challenges like dealing with team cultural differences in how work is executed. Hence, relating to leadership demands for frontline employees is important. As most of them stated, 'understanding task and meeting requirements KPIs key performance indicators' impacts the leadership reputation linked to team performance. The productive output meets the hotel guest priorities, which are core attributes that competencies deliver. They confirmed to work with different teams and leaders, each having a different pace of work, operations area, speed of service, quality parameters, norms and team culture.

The prerequisite to qualify as a team member in the different departments is the ability to show adaptation competencies, where the baseline performance of any frontline employee productive rests on acquired training skills on building self-competencies. It implies self-competencies are prerequisites, while leadership supervision to mentor during the nesting period is instrumental in aligning the skill gap in learnt and applied in the task context. It has been linked to employee passion and commitment, motivation, interest, and intent to pursue supervision and nurturing talent in their daily tasks, fostering engagement. It implies high-quality service in a high ambience setting in a luxury hotel requires carefully building the skills and competencies to a level where service innovation is required. Even though there is evidence of SOP training and refresher training, the supervisor always emphasizes competencies of common sense for service encounter positions as a prerequisite. Service innovation to resolve a problem in luxury hotels is linked to management norms and SOP, process fluidity, problem-solving abilities and fast decision-making. Customer satisfaction competency is the ability to direct all energies, past job experience, education with self-competency, and supervisor and peer guidance combined with team competency to achieve productivity and output (see Figure 3).

The third important emerging trend from the second line of themes, for the luxury hotel context, is that business transactions require encounters for the guest and the host (employee), where situations of multicultural dimensions are undeniable. For managing luxury hotel guests from different nationalities, overcoming language boundaries and cultural differences requires emotional intelligence. It is a higher-level competency that relates to different teams' collaboration to resolve issues quickly by using all other competencies intensely. While it also brought out instances of creativity and intelligence related to Hospitality intelligence (HI), it was found that employee ability to the perceptions about situations requires faster exploration of available choices.

The frontline employee must seek solutions within a given time to focus on decision-making and reconsider cross-cultural differences. The frontline employees, irrespective of their job descriptions, must intelligently swing between luxury hotel organizational culture and guest cross-cultural differences to tackle situations and requirements related to diverse cultural concepts and environments. The MAXQDA software shows in the above illustration that self-competency and team competency requires communication competency and cross-culture competency to deal with transactions and dynamism in the environment, which is a higher-level change competency. All of these contribute to customer satisfaction competencies supported by engagement and commitment to the job (see Figure 3).

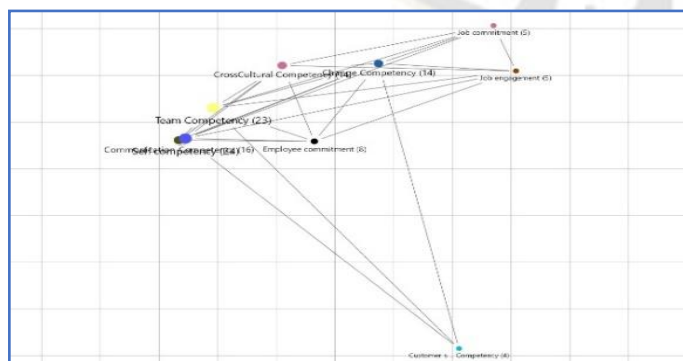


Figure 3. Competencies relationship model

VI. DISCUSSION

The first and core competency that forms the inductive theory-building process for this research outcome shows that self-competency and team competencies are the primary cores. It helps to define employee eligibility in meeting the employable criteria in a department, team and luxury hotel. They coupled in a luxury hotel context to meet the productivity dimension of the individual and the team members, as per the findings of Marneros et al. (2020). The second outcome of the thematic analysis confirms the social capital theory as discussed (Swanson et al., 2020), where different roles and job descriptions

within luxury hotels need processes to express those self-competencies concerning tasks with others. The interviews showed the above similarities in supporting newly introduced 'relational competency' and how failures exist when relational competencies cannot achieve the intended goals. Thirdly, there is evidence that involves all the lower-level list of self-competencies, team competency, change competency, and cross-cultural competency to contribute to a higher-level, action-oriented, and productivity linked 'customer satisfaction competency'. The second and third new competencies are process-centric competencies, which use decision-making self-efficacy in their task area (Ganie & Saleem, 2018). To denote action and relationship in the luxury hotel operations context contributes significantly to achieving organizational efficiency. An employee's productivity depends on how fast they adapt to learn and unlearn new competencies, to sustain and be employable in luxury job designation in the organization.

The results showed that new training to counter situational forces acting on the luxury hotel operational efficiency is leveraged through competency profiling. Additional TNA and periodic performance appraisals were needed to adopt and influence competencies to influence need demands of service quality to safeguard guests and colleagues against COVID-19. It is a tactical and strategic direction in HRM, where competency-driven individual and team-level productivity have been used to create appropriate responses for hospitality efficiency from the luxury service perspective. A new shift towards service-centric offering operations was effective, using gap analysis and additional training to inculcate employee competencies for countering service delivery difficulties during COVID-19. Additionally, organizational leadership mentoring and organizational culture form a key element for shaping competencies in hospitality employees, empowering higher-level decision-making, in perspective of each job description, to achieve quicker resolution of issues and problems in each service encounter.

Therefore, research outcomes showed a new trend in the luxury hospitality sector as they continuously focus on building employee competencies using SHRM. The dimensions like adjustment, adaptability for teams, and accommodative behaviour at the individual employee level helped operational situational factors add different dimensions of service delivery during COVID-19 to be holistic and strategic. Expanding the service dimensions showed opening employee communication channels, with empowerment to aid in overcoming COVID-19 service challenges and offer luxury branding deliverables. The competency mapping in each job description has structurally, and process-wise contributed to the overall efficiency of individual, team and hotel operations. It has helped eliminate service challenges in each service encounter, safeguarding employee and guest health and well-being and making the stay experience unique for luxury hotel guests. The study's outcome shows that a capabilities-building exercise by HRM for the self and team competencies is a systems approach in HRM. The organizational culture needs to shape cross-cultural, relational competencies linked to service operations and employee productivity to enhance guest satisfaction. It is the highest level of competency build, showing flexibility balancing luxury dimension, to contribute to organizational efficiency in a luxury hotel context.

VII. IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The study aimed to identify competencies required in front office employees of the hospitality sector post covid 19 pandemic and build a relationship model. Based on identified competencies HR department while planning for hiring of employees. Also, if the recruitment process can include competency-based hiring, the process will become easier to hire competent staff. While doing performance management, an individual's KPIs can meet organizational goals and identify the training needs of employees. The outcomes of this research contribute to the HRM in business practice as managers can focus and identify the employee self and team competencies to shape higher competencies, building cross-cultural and customer satisfaction-centric competencies.

Regarding practical implications, the findings provide insights that competencies are linked to each other and greatly impact an individual. Self-competency is directly related to communication and team competency, which means an employee who is self-aware of his skills will communicate and perform better in a team.

Hence, hospitality and HRM must consider an individual's competencies to meet the organization's objectives and individual growth in the industry. Our findings further established that competencies also lead to organizational efficiency since individuals with better competencies will result in effective working relationships. Finally, the competencies relationship model established the importance of organizational support and continuous learning to individual employees' resilience development.

Firstly, this study is limited to five-star hotels in India. The relationship competencies model results will vary with geographical and cultural changes. The study responses are highly subjective, and response errors can occur as front office employees can focus on their competencies rather than perceiving other competencies.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The study attempted to know how employees' competencies relationship model work in Indian hospitality sector context. Hotel business has regained its pace with rising service standards post COVID-19. The employees paid attention to their skills and behaviour competencies. Self-competency, communication skills and team competencies are important for front-line employees. Moreover, employees need to reconsider their cross-cultural competencies for working in a cross-cultural team.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to acknowledge the managers of organizations under study for their support during the field work. We are appreciating the contribution of editor(s) and anonymous reviewers for the feedback and support during the publication process.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ali, M. A., Alarifi, G., & Yehia, E. F. "Towards Sustainable Careers for Saudi Employees in Tourism and Hospitality Sector: The Impact of Career Competencies on Turnover Intention", *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 134, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2022-0073>
- [2] Alexakis, G., & Jiang, L. "Industry competencies and the optimal hospitality management curriculum: An empirical study". *Journal of*

- Hospitality & Tourism Education, vol. vol. 31, no. 4, pp. 210-220, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10963758.2019.1575748>
- [3] Andi Kele, A. T. "Employee empowerment in luxury hotels in East Malaysia" (Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)). The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand, 2020. <https://hdl.handle.net/10289/13690>
- [4] Argus, D., Samson, D. "Organisational (Business) Strategy". In: Strategic Leadership for Business Value Creation. Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-9430-4_2
- [5] Beshr, H. A., & Hossan, C. G. "Key drivers for service innovation in the UAE's hotel sector". International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management, vol. 22, no. 3, pp. 251-268, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEIM.2018.091769>
- [6] Bharwani, S. and Talib, P. "Competencies of hotel general managers: a conceptual framework", International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 393-418, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2015-0448>
- [7] Bufquin, D., Park, J. Y., Back, R. M., de Souza Meira, J. V., & Hight, S. K. "Employee work status, mental health, substance use, and career turnover intentions: An examination of restaurant employees during COVID-19". International Journal of Hospitality Management, vol. 93, 102764, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102764>
- [8] Cerf, K. L. K. "Strategies to Improve Millennial Employee Engagement in the Luxury Resort Industry". (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University), 2017.
- [9] Chandra, Y., & Shang, L. "Qualitative research using R: A systematic approach". Springer Singapore, pp. 91-106, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3170-1>
- [10] Chiang, C. F., & Hsieh, T. S. "The impacts of perceived organizational support and psychological empowerment on job performance: The mediating effects of organizational citizenship behavior". International journal of hospitality management, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 180-190, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2011.04.011>
- [11] Ali Dalgic & Yilmaz Akgunduz, "Relationships among Organizational-Based Self-Esteem, Social Exchange, and Turnover Intention of Hotel Employees: Impact of Job Dedication", Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 176-195, 2022. DOI: 10.1080/1528008X.2020.1864563
- [12] Dalvi, N. "An Empirical Study of Effects of Competency Enhancement Initiatives on the Employees Performance". Advance and Innovative Research, vol. 6, no. 1, 204, 2019.
- [13] Dixon, R. A., & Jovanovska, E. "Identifying Competencies for Leisure and Hospitality Curriculum in a Rural Region". Journal of Curriculum and Teaching, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 90-98, 2022.
- [14] Ferrary, M. "Investing in transferable strategic human capital through alliances in the luxury hotel industry". Journal of Knowledge Management, vol. 19, no. 5, pp. 1007-1028, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-01-2015-0045>
- [15] Ganie, S. A., & Saleem, I. "The transpiring journey of competence based human resource management: A literature review". International Journal of Management Studies, vol. 3, no. 7, 17, 2018. DOI: 10.18843/ijms/v5i3(7)/03
- [16] Hahang, E., Bayraktar, S., & Jiménez, A. "Early evidence of leadership skills and strategies in managing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the hospitality industry". Cross Cultural & Strategic Management. Vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 493- 515, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCSM-03-2021-0041>
- [17] Hasyim, L. C., Syah, T. Y. R., Indradewa, R., & Pusaka, S. "Five Success Stages in Human Capital Planning Over LH Hotel Business". Journal of Multidisciplinary Academic, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 171-176, 2020.
- [18] Holden, G., Barker, K., Kuppens, S., & Rosenberg, G. "Self-efficacy regarding social work competencies". Research on Social Work Practice, vol. 27, no. 5, pp. 594-606, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315155886>
- [19] Huang, C., Wu, K., & Zhang, Y. "Understanding precedents for frontline employee turnover in luxury hotels: Emotional intelligence as a unifying factor". Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 26-46, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332845.2019.1526504>
- [20] Jeong, M., Lee, M., & Nagesvaran, B. "Employees' use of mobile devices and their perceived outcomes in the workplace: A case of luxury hotel". International Journal of Hospitality Management, vol. 57, pp. 40-51, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2016.05.003>
- [21] Jung, H. S., Jung, Y. S., & Yoon, H. H. "COVID-19: The effects of job insecurity on the job engagement and turnover intent of deluxe hotel employees and the moderating role of generational characteristics". International journal of hospitality management, vol. 92, 102703, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102703>
- [22] Kaliyamoorthy, S., Al-Shibami, A. H., Nusari, M., & Ghosh, A. "Effect of motivation on employee retention in Malaysian hotels". International Journal of Management and Human Science (IJMHS), vol. 2, no. 1, 37, 2018-42.
- [23] Koc, E. "Cross-cultural aspects of tourism and hospitality: A services marketing and management perspective". Routledge. 271, 2020.
- [24] Lam, R., Cheung, C., & Lugosi, P. "The impacts of cultural and emotional intelligence on hotel guest satisfaction: Asian and non-Asian perceptions of staff capabilities". Journal of China Tourism Research, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 455-477, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2020.1771500>
- [25] Lee, Y. K., Kim, S. H., Kim, M. S., & Kim, H. S. "Person-environment fit and its effects on employees' emotions and self-rated/supervisor-rated performances: The case of employees in luxury hotel restaurants". International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, vol. 29, no. 5, pp. 1447-1467, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-08-2015-0441>
- [26] Magalhães, C., Araújo, A., & Andrés-Marques, M. I. "How Do Hospitality Workers Perceive Their Work Skills before and after the Lockdown Imposed by the COVID-19 Pandemic? Social Sciences", vol. 11, no. 12, 588, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soecsci11120588>
- [27] Manuti, A., Pastore, S., Scardigno, A. F., Giancaspro, M. L., & Morciano, D. "Formal and informal learning in the workplace: A research review". International journal of training and development, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 1-17, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijttd.12044>
- [28] Marneros, S., Papageorgiou, G., & Efstathiades, A. "Identifying key success competencies for the hospitality industry: The perspectives of professionals". Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 237-261, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15313220.2020.1745732>
- [29] Jo Dolasinski, M., & Reynolds, J. "Hotel leader competencies: Industry practitioner perspectives". Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 349-367, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332845.2019.1599785>
- [30] Manoharan, A., Jones, J., Jiang, Z., & Singal, M. Career optimism of culturally and linguistically diverse hotel workers in the pandemic age". International Journal of Hospitality Management, vol. 93, 102796, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102796>
- [31] Muchiri, H. "Effects of rewards on employee performance in the hospitality industry: A case of Nairobi Serena Hotel" (Doctoral dissertation, United States International University-Africa), 2016.
- [32] Mutindi, U. J. M., Namusonge, G. S., & Obwogi, J. "Effects of strategic management drivers on organizational performance: a survey of the hotel industry in Kenyan coasts", 2013. <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/7964>
- [33] Nagar, P., & Agarwal, A. K. "EMPLOYEES' INTENTION IN HOTEL INDUSTRY, DUE TO IMPACT OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES IN JAIPUR, INDIA". International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research. Vol. 11, no. 4, 2022. DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.04.205>
- [34] Ngoc Su, D., Luc Tra, D., Thi Huynh, H. M., Nguyen, H. H. T., & O'Mahony, B. "Enhancing resilience in the Covid-19 crisis: lessons from human resource management practices in Vietnam". Current Issues in Tourism, vol. 24, no. 22, pp. 3189-3205, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1863930>
- [35] O'Reilly, C. "Identifying management competencies of hotel owner-managers & general managers in the Republic of Ireland". Nottingham Trent University (United Kingdom), 2015. <https://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/27725>
- [36] Otoo, F. N. K. "Human resource management (HRM) practices and organizational performance: The mediating role of employee competencies". Employee Relations: The International Journal. Vol. 41, no. 5, pp. 949-970, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-02-2018-0053>
- [37] Otoo, F. N. K., & Mishra, M. "Influence of human resource development (HRD) practices on hotel industry's performance: The role of employee competencies". European Journal of Training and Development. Vol. 42, no. 7, pp. 435-454, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-12-2017-0113>

- [38] Park, M., & Jones, T. "Going virtual: The impact of COVID-19 on internships in tourism, events, and hospitality education". *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 176-193, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10963758.2021.1907198>
- [39] Panno, A. "Performance measurement and management in small companies of the service sector; evidence from a sample of Italian hotels". *Measuring business excellence*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 133-160, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MBE-01-2018-0004>
- [40] Parte-Esteban, L., & Alberca-Oliver, P. "New insights into dynamic efficiency: the effects of firm factors". *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. Vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 107-129, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-08-2013-0342>
- [41] Priyangika, K. D. T., Perera, B. A. K. S., & Wickremanayake Karunaratne, T. L. "Facilities management roles in the hotel industry: the skills and competencies required". *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 454-473, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2019.1679060>
- [42] Promnil, N. "Qualifications Required for Hotel Employees in Thailand: The Change After the Covid-19 Pandemic", *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2021. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361386676>
- [43] Rabiul, M. K., Shamsudin, F. M., Yean, T. F., & Patwary, A. K. "Linking leadership styles to communication competency and work engagement: evidence from the hotel industry". *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 425-446, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTI-09-2021-0247>
- [44] Reddyoggu, J.K., Pillutla, R.S., Narayana, M.G.P.L. "Agility in Competency Building—A Pedagogical Approach with a Case Illustration from the Indian IT Industry". In: Sushil, Connell, J., Burgess, J. (eds) *Flexible Work Organizations. Flexible Systems Management*. Springer, New Delhi. pp. 165-177, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-81-322-2834-9_11
- [45] Ružić, M. D. (2015). Direct and indirect contribution of HRM practice to hotel company performance". *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol. 49, pp. 56-65, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2015.05.008>
- [46] Salman, M., Ganie, S. A., & Saleem, I. "Employee competencies as predictors of organizational performance: a study of public and private sector banks". *Management and Labour Studies*, vol. 45, no. 4, pp. 416-432, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0258042X209390>
- [47] Salman, M., Ganie, S. A., & Saleem, I. "The concept of competence: a thematic review and discussion". *European Journal of Training and Development*, vol. 44, no. 6/7, pp. 717-742, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-10-2019-0171>
- [48] Sanjeev, G. M., & Birdie, A. K. "The tourism and hospitality industry in India: emerging issues for the next decade". *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 355-361, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-05-2019-0030>
- [49] Sen, K., & Bhattacharya, A. "Attracting and managing talent, how are the top three hotel companies in India doing it?". *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 404-417, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-04-2019-0021>
- [50] Shamim, S. "An investigation of antecedents of knowledge management among hospitality employees, with the focus on human factors, related to leaders and subordinates" (Doctoral dissertation, Bournemouth University), 2018.
- [51] Shi, F., Shi, D., Weaver, D., & Samaniego Chavez, C. E. "Adapt to not just survive but thrive: resilience strategies of five-star hotels at difficult times". *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, vol. 33, no. 9, pp. 2886-2906, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-10-2020-1194>
- [52] Sitthiwarongchai, C. (2017). Performance competency development for operating staff of lodging business in Ranong province". In *Academic International Conference on Multidisciplinary Studies and Education*. Vol. 3, no. 2, 93, 2017.
- [53] Swanson, E., Kim, S., Lee, S. M., Yang, J. J., & Lee, Y. K. The effect of leader competencies on knowledge sharing and job performance: Social capital theory". *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, vol. 42, pp. 88-96, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2019.11.004>
- [54] Vo-Thanh, T., Vu, T. V., Nguyen, N. P., Nguyen, D. V., Zaman, M., & Chi, H. "How does hotel employees' satisfaction with the organization's COVID-19 responses affect job insecurity and job performance?" *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, vol. 29, no. 6, pp. 907-925, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1850750>
- [55] Widodo, W. (2021). Enhancing teachers' professional competence through grit, personality, and creativity". *Management Science Letters*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 129-138, 2021. DOI: 10.5267/j.msl.2020.8.022
- [56] Woldman, N. "Competence development of Temporary Agency Workers: understanding the complexities of a triangular employment relationship" (Doctoral dissertation, Wageningen University and Research), 2019.
- [57] Woo, S. E., O'Boyle, E. H., & Spector, P. E. "Best practices in developing, conducting, and evaluating inductive research". *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 255-264, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2016.08.004>
- [58] Xu, J., Tavitiyaman, P., Kim, H. J., & Lo, S. K. J. "Hospitality and tourism higher education in the post-COVID era: is it time to change?". *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 278-290, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10963758.2022.2056044>
- [59] Yang, H., Cheung, C., & Li, W. "Intercultural communication competency practices in the hotel industry". *Journal of China Tourism Research*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 162-184, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2020.1807432>