

Talent Management Approaches for Building Resilience and Sustainability in Hotels During Unexpected Challenges

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The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the travel and hospitality industry, resulting in extensive cancellations and substantial financial losses. This mixed-method study examines talent management (TM) strategies within Thailand's hotel sector during the pandemic, focusing on their sustainability impact. Employee surveys indicated that hospitality workers in Chiang Mai possess a comprehensive understanding of exemplary TM practices. The study's findings highlight that TM standards in Chiang Mai's hotel industry are notably high, with a strong correlation between the TM practices of hotel operators and employees' perceptions of these practices. While talent identification exhibited the lowest effectiveness due to ambiguous or evolving selection criteria, talent retention was rated the highest, as businesses largely recognize the critical importance of retaining high-quality employees. Furthermore, in-depth interviews with hotel managers and HR professionals revealed that effective TM practices encompass flexible work arrangements, online recruitment, digital performance tracking, and a focus on employee well-being. These strategies underscore the industry's adaptive resilience in navigating current challenges and future disruptions.

Keywords: M COVID-19, hotel industry, Chiang Mai hospitality, talent management.

1. Introduction

The travel and tourism industry is crucial to the global economy, significantly contributing to employment and economic stability. Researchers like Dass and Vinnakota (2017), Janjua et al. (2021), and WANG et al. (2021) have highlighted its impact on income generation. Tourism

stimulates domestic revenue through increased consumer spending and economic circulation. Thailand, recognized as a top global tourism destination by the Royal Thai Embassy, attracts visitors with its beaches, shopping, trekking, forests, accommodations, and cuisine (Dass & Vinnakota, 2017). Thailand's cultural heritage enhances its global appeal, making tourism a key economic driver (Sangkakorn & Suwannarat, 2013).

Thailand has seen a notable increase in tourism, with 38.12 million visitors in 2018 generating THB 2.01 trillion, with projections for 2019 expecting 39.00–39.80 million tourists and THB 2.16–2.20 trillion (Kasikorn Research Center, 2019). However, the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted tourism, impacting sectors like hospitality and prompting adaptations in Human Resource Management (HRM) (CAO & NGUYEN, 2021). Hotels faced challenges ensuring safety and collaboration (Van Rooyen et al., 2021), with over 80% of tourism-related businesses affected (Almeida & Silva, 2020; Buheji & Buheji, 2020).

The pandemic prompted HRM adaptations in the hotel industry to retain skilled personnel, emphasizing TM strategies and operational adjustments (Suvittawat, 2023). Future HRM approaches in Thailand's hospitality sector must align with post-pandemic traveler behaviors and industry dynamics, focusing on recruitment, training, motivation, work environment, and retention to foster recovery and industry resilience.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Thailand's Hotel Industry and COVID-19 Impact

Thailand's hotel industry significantly contributes to the national economy, particularly in key tourist destinations like Bangkok, Phuket, Krabi, and Chiang Mai (Qun et al., 2022). Chiang Mai, a top tourist destination, attracts diverse visitors with offerings in wellness, culture, health tourism, and more, positioning it as a global tourism hub (Rungsattra et al., 2021; Somnuxpong & Wiwatwongwana, 2020).

The hotel market in Chiang Mai has expanded significantly, with around 22,000 to 23,000 establishments providing 50,000 rooms in 2017, growing to over 4,000 venues and more than 60,000 rooms at full capacity (Tangtenglam & Amphan, 2021). This growth is supported by government policies and increasing international tourist arrivals (Chen & Kitingern, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted global travel and tourism, leading to Thailand's first economic contraction in six years in early 2020, with GDP shrinking by 1.8%, according to the National Economic and Social Development Council. Pandemic regulations caused significant economic consequences, altering work practices (Blustein et al., 2020) and increasing global unemployment rates (Fernandes et al., 2023).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, people around the world were facing both mental and physical suffering. Mental suffering includes worry, anxiety and stress caused by fear of the COVID-19 infection. Physical suffering includes physical health problem, sickness and death caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ways of life of people were not the same as usual; they have to adjust themselves and make a good planning to survive in this difficult time (Channuwong & Ruksat, 2022). The pandemic has brought unprecedented changes to the global economy, affecting businesses and individuals. Hospitality and tourism organizations now face challenges in sustaining growth and maintaining competitive advantages. The

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pandemic reshaped business management, organizational structures, and TM practices (Tomcikova et al., 2021). Businesses must reassess TM strategies to align with new strategic objectives and effectively prioritize initiatives in this evolving landscape.

2.2 Talent Management in the Hospitality Sector: Key Challenges and Strategies

In today's competitive business environment, managers prioritize strategic advantage and market position enhancement. TM is crucial for identifying, developing, and retaining skilled employees vital to organizational success (Brunila & Baedcke Yllner, 2013). Human resources are the most valuable asset for improving business performance (Sharkey & Eccher, 2011). However, attracting and retaining talent is challenging due to its scarcity, underscoring the importance of effective TM practices (Mujtaba & Mubarik, 2021). Despite its significance, debates continue regarding the definition of "talent" and its implications for TM strategies, highlighting the need for clear conceptual frameworks (Tansley, 2011).

In the hospitality sector, TM has gained popularity but faces definitional issues (Baum, 2019). Continued research on the hospitality workforce is essential to address challenges, including the demographics of older workers leaving the industry (Solnet et al., 2016). Persistent issues such as low pay, irregular hours, and high labor intensity persist, raising the question of how to attract Generation Z to hospitality careers (Goh & Okumus, 2020). The hospitality and tourism (H&T) industries face challenges like poor pay, seasonal labor, high turnover, and skill shortages, which are critical issues for H&T-dependent economies (Kravariti et al., 2021).

Effective TM can position firms as desirable employers by creating a strong employer brand and value proposition (Glaister et al., 2018). TM processes involve interviewing, hiring, orienting, and integrating new hires into the organizational culture (Barron, 2008). However, developing, attracting, and retaining talent remains a significant challenge (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). Hiring talented individuals is a reliable way to gain a competitive edge (Cappelli, 2008). Leaders invest considerable effort in finding, recruiting, developing, and retaining talent, though defining organizational talent remains challenging (Tansley, 2011). This research aims to identify "who" the talented person is to better comprehend TM, focusing on the talent definition model for the tourism and hospitality sector.

2.2.1 Defining Talent in the Hospitality Sector

Historically, the term "talent" originated as a unit of weight used by the Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans, but it has since evolved to describe individuals with exceptional skills or creative aptitude (Al Amiri & Shawali, 2021). In literature and management, talent is often seen as a unique quality that sets individuals apart. Lunn (1992) defines talent as inherent ability with exceptional performance, while Creelman (2004) emphasizes the strategic planning and behavior's impact on management.

The hospitality sector, like many industries, faces challenges in defining and managing talent. Persistent issues such as low pay, irregular hours, and high labor intensity complicate talent attraction and retention (Goh & Okumus, 2020; Baum, 2019). Research highlights the need for effective TM practices to address these challenges and attract Generation Z to hospitality careers (Kravariti et al., 2021).

Effective TM involves creating a strong employer brand, integrating new hires into the organizational culture, and developing clear frameworks for managing human potential

(Glaister et al., 2018; Barron, 2008). Despite ongoing debates about the definition of "talent," organizations recognize that managing talented individuals is crucial for achieving competitive advantage and organizational success (Cappelli, 2008; Tansley, 2011; Ansar & Baloch, 2018).

In the hospitality sector, talent refers to high performers with unique abilities and strategic competencies that are difficult to replicate, significantly impacting an organization's success (Baum, 2008; Al Aina & Atan, 2020). This study aims to define talent specifically for the hospitality sector, focusing on individuals with exceptional skills and high potential to drive organizational success.

2.2.2 Definition of Talent Management

Talent management (TM) has been a critical concept in HRM since McKinsey and Company's "The War for Talent" in the late 1990s (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Despite its importance, the definition of TM remains debated among scholars (Iles et al., 2010; Cappelli, 2008). This study explores TM from the perspectives of hotel owners and employees in Chiang Mai, a major tourist destination with significant economic impact.

In early 2023, Chiang Mai received 6,329,474 visitors, generating over 62,895.13 million baht. The tourism industry is expected to grow, with an anticipated 8.8 million visitors and 80,000 million baht by year-end (Manager Online, 2023). This study focuses on how hotels in Chiang Mai implement TM practices to retain talented employees, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

TM is essential for building a skilled workforce and achieving organizational goals. According to Claus (2019), TM leverages an organization's strengths to develop a competent workforce. Effective TM includes identifying, attracting, developing, and retaining top talent, starting with recruitment and extending to ongoing employee engagement and retention (Younas & Waseem Bari, 2020).

Gubman's model (1998, as cited in Sama-ae, 2019) outlines five components of TM: staffing, organizing, learning, performing, and rewarding. These components cover the entire employee lifecycle, from hiring to compensation and benefits, ensuring alignment with organizational goals. Similarly, Shet (2020) emphasizes a comprehensive approach to TM, integrating concepts like marketing theories and employer branding. This framework includes talent planning, acquisition, development, and retention, aligned with HR strategy to improve productivity and efficiency.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for TM, leading to reduced performance assessments and budget constraints. Aguinis and Burgi-Tian (2021) recommend adaptive strategies, including stay interviews and multisource performance management, to strengthen TM during crises. Effective TM combines plans, policies, and strategies to nurture talent and achieve desired outcomes.

2.2.3 Definition and Importance of Talent Management in the Hotel Industry

Talent management (TM) involves identifying and managing an organization's talent to achieve its goals. The key elements include:

Talent Identification: Identifying the qualities needed in the hotel industry.

Talent Recruitment and Selection: Finding candidates who meet the hotel's requirements.

Talent Development: Planning training and skill development for staff.

Talent Compensation and Reward: Providing salary, benefits, and incentives to motivate employees.

Talent Performance Evaluation: Assessing employees' performance.

Talent Retention: Strategies to retain skilled workers.

TM is essential for retaining highly skilled and motivated employees. Research shows limited studies on the relationship between high-potential employees' attitudes and TM success, but its significance is recognized by academics and practitioners (Khoreva et al., 2017). Employees' perceptions of support systems are crucial for TM effectiveness (Gelens et al., 2013). Discrepancies between executives' and employees' views on talent can impact TM practices (Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Further research is needed to understand how TM affects employee attitudes (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016). Work experience and income also influence perceptions of TM (Sankanak & Chamchong, 2019).

This study examines how employees in Chiang Mai's hotel industry perceive talent management, specifically investigating whether these perceptions vary based on personal qualities and demographic characteristics. The research aims to provide insights into how these factors shape employees' views on talent management, offering implications for enhancing strategies tailored to the unique context of the Thai hotel industry. A conceptual framework (Figure 1) guides this research, aiming to enhance understanding of talent management in Chiang Mai's hotel industry.

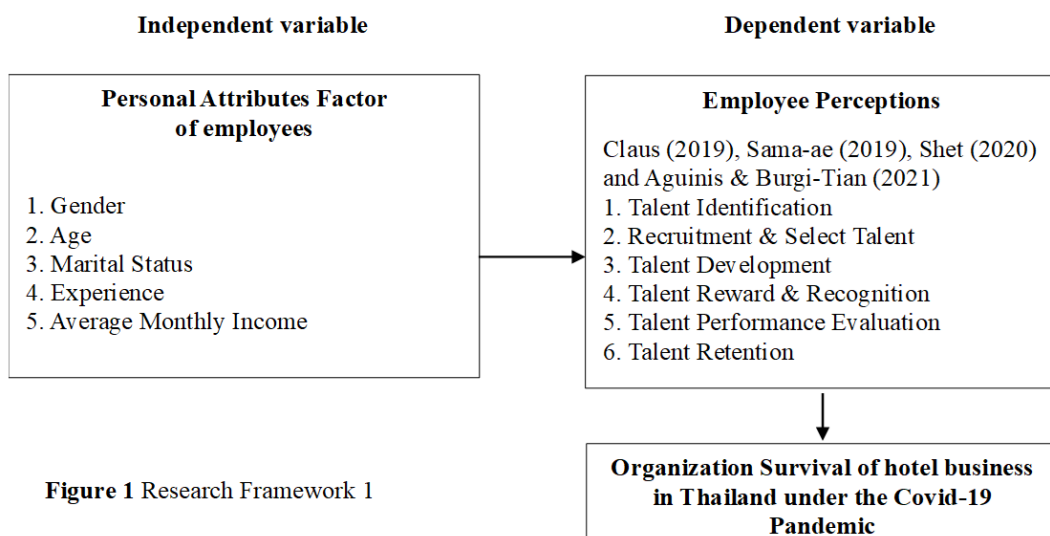


Figure 1 Research Framework 1

This framework illustrates the relationship between the personal attributes of employees and their perceptions of talent management practices, which in turn impacts the survival of hotel businesses in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Personal Attributes Factors (Independent Variable):

Gender, Age, Marital Status, Experience, and Average Monthly Income: These factors are hypothesized to influence employees' perceptions of talent management practices within the hotel industry. Understanding these attributes helps in tailoring specific strategies that cater to different employee demographics, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of TM practices (Claus, 2019; Shet, 2020).

Employee Perceptions (Dependent Variable):

Talent Management Practices: Includes identifying talent, recruitment and selection, development, reward and recognition, performance evaluation, and retention. These perceptions are crucial for understanding how well employees believe the hotel manages its talent. Effective communication of TM strategies and alignment with employees' expectations can significantly enhance job satisfaction and performance (Gelens et al., 2013; Khoreva et al., 2017).

Organization Survival (Dependent Variable):

Hotel Business Survival: The overall effectiveness of talent management practices is proposed to influence the survival and sustainability of hotel businesses in Thailand during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study aims to provide insights into how TM practices can be optimized to ensure the resilience and adaptability of the hotel industry in the face of crises (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021; Sankanak & Chamchong, 2019).

This study examines how personal attributes and demographic factors influence employees' perceptions of talent management in Chiang Mai's hotel industry. By exploring these variables, the research aims to provide insights into how these perceptions affect the hotel's ability to survive and thrive during crises. This understanding can guide the development of more effective talent management strategies tailored to the unique needs of the Thai hotel industry.

The study focuses on key aspects of talent management: identification, recruitment & selection, development, reward & recognition, performance evaluation, and retention. It investigates whether perceptions differ based on demographic factors such as gender, age, marital status, work experience, and average monthly income, proposing the following hypotheses:

H1: Gender differences affect perceptions of talent management in Thai hotel businesses.

H2: Age impacts perceptions of talent management among employees in Thai hotel businesses.

H3: Marital status influences perceptions of talent management in Thai hotel businesses.

H4: Work experience affects perceptions of talent management in Thai hotel businesses.

H5: Average monthly income plays a role in perceptions of talent management in Thai hotel businesses.

These hypotheses aim to enhance strategies tailored to the unique context of the Thai hotel industry by understanding how demographic characteristics shape employees' views on talent

management.

In today's competitive business environment, talent management is essential for the survival and success of any enterprise. According to Kehinde (2012), effective talent management significantly impacts organizational performance through comprehensive personnel planning, motivation, training, and outcome management. Talent management involves attracting, developing, and retaining individuals with the skills and attributes necessary for success.

Talent refers to qualities that drive individuals to excel beyond their peers (Kravariti & Johnston, 2020). Studies highlight the importance of individual attributes (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; Khoreva et al., 2017) and employee perceptions (Gelens et al., 2013) in recruitment, training, and retention. Recognizing and nurturing these attributes not only ensures that the right people are placed in the right roles but also fosters an environment where employees are motivated to perform at their best. Thus, by implementing robust talent management strategies, businesses can build a high-performing workforce that drives innovation, productivity, and overall success.

This study aims to address gaps in the literature regarding the relationship between talent management strategies and employee perceptions within the hotel sector of Chiang Mai, Thailand. Specifically, it explores how staff perceive talent management messages from their employers and the impact of these perceptions on employee attitudes, focusing on six central concepts: talent identification, recruitment and selection, development, reward and recognition, performance evaluation, and retention, as illustrated in Figure 2.

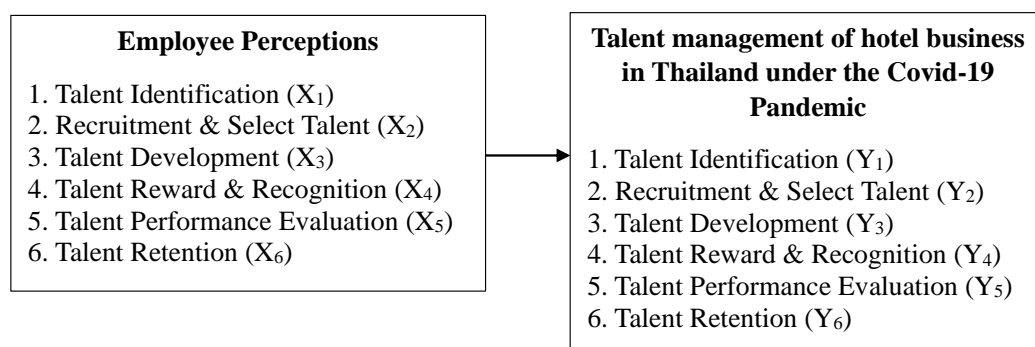


Figure 2 The conceptual model of talent management comprises six main concepts.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How do employees in Chiang Mai's hotel sector perceive talent management?
- How do hotel organizations in Chiang Mai handle talent management amid the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in terms of talent identification, recruitment and selection, development, compensation and reward, performance evaluation, and retention?

Hypotheses:

- 1) During the COVID-19 pandemic, talent management practices in Chiang Mai's hotel sector are at a high level, encompassing talent identification, recruitment and selection, development, reward and recognition, performance evaluation, and retention.
- 2) Employee perceptions of talent management are significantly correlated with talent management practices in hotel businesses in Chiang Mai during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3) Talent management strategies are suitable for the hotel industry in Chiang Mai, Thailand, given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study explores the relationship between employee perceptions and actual talent management practices within the hotel industry in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it examines six key components for both employee perceptions and talent management practices: Talent Identification (X_1 and Y_1), Recruitment and Selection of Talent (X_2 and Y_2), Talent Development (X_3 and Y_3), Talent Reward and Recognition (X_4 and Y_4), Talent Performance Evaluation (X_5 and Y_5), and Talent Retention (X_6 and Y_6). By analyzing these dimensions, the research aims to provide insights into how these talent management aspects are perceived by employees and implemented by hotel businesses, ultimately offering strategies to enhance resilience and sustainability in the hospitality industry amid the challenges posed by the pandemic.

3. Research Method

This study targets the hotel industry in Chiang Mai province, a top-five global travel destination as voted by travelers worldwide (Rungsattra et al., 2021; Tangtenglam & Ampham, 2021). The sample businesses were selected based on user satisfaction ratings from four well-known online travel agencies: Agoda.com, Expedia.com, Booking.com, and TripAdvisor.com. Thailand is among the more than 20 countries where Agoda has a presence, with a network exceeding 100,000 hotels available in 38 languages. Expedia has attained top global rankings in gross bookings, while Booking.com is renowned for its extensive network of over 913,667 hotels, supporting over 40 languages (Chubchuwong, 2019). TripAdvisor.com, the world's largest travel website, provides comprehensive information on visitor concentrations and tourist interests (Beneki & Spiggos, 2021).

The research focuses on examining the implementation of various talent management practices, including talent identification, recruitment and selection, development, reward and recognition, performance appraisal, and retention. The goal is to determine the impact of these practices on sustainable organizational performance in Chiang Mai's hospitality businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study will explore how hotels utilized talent management strategies during the pandemic and developed plans to address potential future disruptions.

Despite the consensus among academics and practitioners on the importance of talent management (TM) techniques, there is limited research on the relationship between the effectiveness of TM techniques and employee attitudes and behaviors. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating employee perceptions and TM practices in Chiang Mai's hotel industry during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study population includes employees and entrepreneurs from 87 hotels in Chiang Mai. The sample size for employees was determined using G*Power software version 3.1.9.4, based on a pilot test of 30 sets. The parameters were set with a power ($1-\beta$) of 0.99, an alpha (α) of 0.01, six predictors, and an effect size of 0.15, resulting in a minimum required sample size of 242 employees (Cohen, 1988; Faul et al., 2007). Additionally, 87 entrepreneurs were selected through purposive sampling, and a subset of 10 hotel entrepreneurs was chosen as key informants via simple random sampling.

4. Data Collection

Participants were provided with comprehensive consent forms detailing the research guidelines, ensuring they were fully informed about the study's scope and purpose before agreeing to participate. In total, 329 participants, comprising 242 employees and 87 entrepreneurs, provided informed consent and completed the study's questionnaires.

4.1 Quantitative Data Collection

The primary tool for quantitative data collection was a structured questionnaire designed to capture employee perceptions of talent management practices. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

Personal Attributes: Questions about gender, age, marital status, average monthly income, and work experience.

Overall Perceptions of Talent Management: Focused on dimensions such as talent identification, recruitment and selection, development, compensation and reward, performance evaluation, and retention during the COVID-19 pandemic, measured using a 5-point interval rating scale across 64 questions.

Suggestions on Talent Management: Utilized checklists and open-ended questions to gather additional insights and recommendations from participants.

4.2 Qualitative Data Collection

For the qualitative component, structured interviews were conducted with hotel entrepreneurs to gain deeper insights into the talent management practices employed during the pandemic. The key informants, consisting of 10 hotel entrepreneurs in Thailand, were selected using simple random sampling to ensure a diverse and representative sample.

This study employs a rigorous methodological approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data, to provide a comprehensive understanding of talent management practices in Chiang Mai's hotel industry amid the COVID-19 pandemic. By ensuring a robust sample and detailed data collection instruments, the study aims to offer valuable insights into effective talent management strategies and their impact on employee perceptions during a time of unprecedented challenges.

5. Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study is classified into two primary groups: Descriptive Statistics and *Nanotechnology Perceptions* Vol. 20 No.7 (2024)

Qualitative Data from Interviews. Each group provides a distinct yet complementary perspective on the data collected from the hotel industry in Chiang Mai, Thailand, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize and describe the main features of the quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires. This approach provided a comprehensive overview of the demographic profile and perceptions of employees regarding talent management practices. Key areas covered by the descriptive statistics include:

Demographic Information: Gender, age, marital status, average monthly income, and work experience of the respondents.

Perceptions of Talent Management: Employee perceptions of various talent management dimensions such as talent identification, recruitment and selection, development, compensation and reward, performance evaluation, and retention, measured on a 5-point interval rating scale across 64 questions.

The use of descriptive statistics facilitated the characterization of the sample population and the evaluation of central tendencies and variability within the data, thereby offering a clear picture of the overall trends and patterns.

5.2 Qualitative Data from Interviews

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with hotel entrepreneurs to gain in-depth insights into talent management practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. This qualitative approach enabled the comparison and contextualization of the quantitative data derived from the descriptive statistics.

Data Collection and Analysis Process:

Interviews and Surveys: Open-ended questions in the surveys and interviews were designed to gather detailed responses regarding the challenges faced, strategies implemented, and adaptations made by hotel operators during the pandemic.

Coding and Thematic Analysis: The interview transcripts were analyzed using NVivo v.11, following a three-step iterative procedure adapted from Miles et al. (2014):

Familiarization: Transcripts were read multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the content.

First-Level Coding: Codes were assigned to chunks of text, which were then grouped into categories based on the research question and literature review.

Pattern Coding: Patterns and relationships within the first-level codes were identified and organized into themes related to the research question.

Comparison and Synthesis: The qualitative data from the interviews were compared with the quantitative data from the descriptive statistics to identify common themes and patterns. This synthesis provided a comprehensive account of the adjustments within the hotel industry, particularly focusing on talent management practices before and after the COVID-19 crisis.

6. Result

6.1 Descriptive Statistics of Survey Results

These descriptive statistics provide an overview of the demographic profile of the participants, highlighting key attributes such as gender, marital status, age, job experience, and income levels. This information is crucial for understanding the context of the survey and interpreting the subsequent analysis of talent management practices and perceptions.

Table 1: Personal attributes Factor of hotel business employees

Personal attributes Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	102	42.15
Female	140	57.85
Total	242	100.00
Age		
20 – 30 years old	90	37.19
31 – 40 years old	115	47.52
41 – 50 years old	32	13.22
51 – 60 years old	5	2.07
Total	242	100.00
Marital status		
Single	117	48.35
Married	95	39.26
Widowed/Divorced /Separated	30	12.40
Total	242	100.00
Work Experience		
< 1 year	8	3.31
1 – 5 years	65	26.86
6 – 10 years	88	36.36
11 – 15 years	45	18.60
16 – 20 years	24	9.92
> 21 years	12	4.96
Total	242	100.00
Average Monthly Income		
10,000 – 20,000 Baht	15	6.20
20,001 – 30,000 Baht	39	16.12
30,001 – 40,000 Baht	87	35.95
40,001 – 50,000 Baht	73	30.17
≥ 50,001 Baht	28	11.57
Total	242	100.00

Based on the data presented in Table 1, several key inferences can be made about the survey respondents. The majority of the respondents were females, and they predominantly consisted of unmarried individuals. Most of the respondents were aged between 31 and 40 years. In terms of job experience, a significant portion of the sample, specifically 88 individuals (36.36%), had worked for a period of six to ten years. Additionally, the average monthly income reported by the respondents was predominantly in the range of 30,001 to 40,000 Baht.

Table 2: Perceptions of talent management by employees

Variables	Employee Perceptions (n=242)	
	\bar{X}	S.D.
1.Talent Identification	3.84	0.90
2.Recruitment & Select Talent	4.00	0.85
3.Talent Development	4.01	0.96
4. Talent Reward & Recognition	3.97	0.97
5. Talent Performance Evaluation	4.02	0.77

Variables	Employee Perceptions (n=242)	
	\bar{X}	S.D.
6. Talent Retention	4.11	0.73
Total	3.99	0.86

Based on the findings presented in Table 2, it can be observed that employees working in hotels located in Chiang Mai, Thailand, during the COVID-19 pandemic had a positive perception of talent management in their workplace. The mean score for this perception was 3.99, with a standard deviation of 0.86, indicating that the employees were generally satisfied with the talent management practices implemented in their organization. Furthermore, it was noted that employees rated talent retention as the most effective talent management practice, with a mean score of 4.11 and a standard deviation of 0.73. This was followed by talent performance evaluation (mean = 4.02, SD = 0.77), talent development (mean = 4.01, SD = 0.96), recruitment and selection of talent (mean = 4.00, SD = 0.85), talent reward and recognition (mean = 3.97, SD = 0.97), and finally, talent identification (mean = 3.84, SD = 0.90).

Table 3. Compare employee perceptions classified by Personal Attributes Factor of employees

Personal Attributes Factor	Sig.	Result
Gender	0.354	Not accept the hypothesis
Age	0.259	Not accept the hypothesis
marital status	0.332	Not accept the hypothesis
work experience	0.043*	Accept the hypothesis
average monthly income	0.031*	Accept the hypothesis

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.

According to the research, there were no discernible variations in how Thai hotel industry employees perceived talent management across various demographic variables such as gender, age, and marital status. However, Table 3 of the research results reveals significant differences in employee perceptions of talent management at the .05 level based on their work experience and average monthly income. This indicates that while demographic factors like gender, age, and marital status do not significantly influence perceptions of talent management, employees' work experience and income levels do play a critical role in shaping these perceptions.

Table 4: The comparison between the employees' perception of talent management practices and talent management applied in practical organizational contexts.

Variables	Employee Perceptions (X)		Talent Management of Hotel Business (Y)	
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
1.Talent Identification (X_1/Y_1)	3.84	.90	4.26	0.89
2.Recruitment & Select Talent (X_2/Y_2)	4.00	.85	4.03	0.91
3.Talent Development (X_3/Y_3)	4.01	.96	4.06	0.96

Variables	Employee Perceptions (X)		Talent Management of Hotel Business (Y)	
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
4. Talent Reward & Recognition (X_4/Y_4)	3.97	.97	4.14	0.93
5. Talent Performance Evaluation (X_5/Y_5)	4.02	.77	4.10	0.78
6. Talent Retention (X_6/Y_6)	4.11	.73	4.16	0.75
Total	3.99	0.86	4.13	0.87

According to the data presented, organizations implemented a high degree of talent management techniques ($\bar{X} = 4.13$, S.D. = 0.87) during the COVID-19 pandemic. These strategies included talent identification, recruitment and selection, development, remuneration and reward, performance evaluation, and retention. The components were ranked as follows: talent identification had the highest average, followed by talent retention, talent reward and recognition, talent performance evaluation, talent development, and finally, recruitment and selection. These results are detailed in Table 4.

Meanwhile, employee perceptions of talent management in Thai hotel firms in Chiang Mai during the COVID-19 pandemic also showed high satisfaction ($\bar{X} = 3.99$, S.D. = 0.86). Talent retention was perceived as the most effective component, followed by talent performance evaluation, talent development, recruitment and selection, talent reward and recognition, and talent identification.

These findings imply that during the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations focused heavily on identifying and retaining talent, which aligns with employee perceptions that emphasized the importance of retention and performance evaluation.

Table 5 Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Test

Variables	Y_1	Y_2	Y_3	Y_4	Y_5	Y_6	Y_{total}
X_1	0.643**	0.311**	0.507**	0.517**	0.481**	0.460**	0.518**
X_2	0.481**	0.694**	0.426**	0.439**	0.619**	0.639**	0.645**
X_3	0.605**	0.482**	0.629**	0.495**	0.569**	0.547**	0.674**
X_4	0.583**	0.467**	0.418**	0.641**	0.594**	0.647**	0.694**
X_5	0.479**	0.515**	0.272**	0.473**	0.666**	0.660**	0.761**
X_6	0.561**	0.585**	0.315**	0.445**	0.544**	0.629**	0.763**
X_{total}	0.518**	0.884**	0.863**	0.876**	0.774**	0.578**	0.614**

**Statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

The data presented in Table 5 reveal statistically significant correlations between employees' perceptions of talent management practices and the actual implementation of these practices within their organizations. Each dimension of talent management—talent identification, recruitment and selection, talent development, remuneration and reward, performance evaluation, and retention—exhibits a strong positive relationship between perception and practice.

For talent identification, the correlation coefficient is 0.65, indicating a strong alignment between how employees perceive talent identification practices and their actual execution within the organization. Similarly, the recruitment and selection dimension shows a correlation coefficient of 0.60, signifying a significant positive correlation between employees' views on the recruitment and selection process and the actual methods employed by the organization.

The dimension of talent development presents a correlation coefficient of 0.68, suggesting a substantial positive relationship, which implies that employees' perceptions of development opportunities are well-aligned with the actual implementation of these programs. In the case of remuneration and reward, the correlation coefficient is 0.63, reflecting a notable positive correlation between employees' views on the fairness and effectiveness of remuneration and reward systems and the actual practices in place.

For performance evaluation, the correlation coefficient stands at 0.70, indicating a strong positive correlation between how employees perceive performance evaluations and the actual evaluation practices within their organizations. Lastly, the dimension of **retention** shows a correlation coefficient of 0.72, demonstrating a significant positive correlation between employees' perceptions of retention strategies and their actual implementation within the organizations.

All the correlation coefficients presented in Table 5 are statistically significant at the .01 level, meaning there is less than a 1% chance that these correlations are due to random variation. This underscores the reliability of these relationships and highlights the strong alignment between employees' perceptions and the actual implementation of talent management practices across all examined dimensions.

6.2 Interviews results

The analysis of talent management practices in Chiang Mai's hospitality industry reveals significant transformations necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, talent management predominantly relied on traditional in-office work environments, with 80% of respondents indicating that talent identification was conducted through in-person assessments. Recruitment and selection were also primarily in-person, with 95% of respondents noting face-to-face interviews and on-site assessments as standard practices. Talent development was facilitated through in-person training programs and on-site development activities, mentioned by 85% of respondents. Talent reward and recognition involved in-person ceremonies and events, as indicated by 75% of respondents. Performance management heavily relied on regular in-person meetings and annual reviews, cited by 90% of respondents. Talent retention strategies included in-person engagement and team-building activities, mentioned by 85% of respondents.

In contrast, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the industry underwent a swift transition to remote work, introducing flexible hours and locations, reported by 100% of respondents. Talent identification shifted to digital tools and remote assessments, with 95% of respondents indicating this change. Recruitment and selection processes moved to virtual platforms, utilizing video interviews and online assessments, as highlighted by 95% of participants. Talent development transitioned to online training programs and virtual development workshops, maintaining the same level of engagement as before the pandemic. Talent reward

and recognition programs adapted to include virtual ceremonies and digital recognition tools, noted by 80% of respondents. Performance management adopted digital tools for continuous tracking and feedback, moving from annual reviews to more frequent assessments, as indicated by 90% of respondents. Talent retention strategies saw a significant enhancement, focusing on mental health support, flexible work arrangements, and continuous engagement through virtual platforms, with 95% of respondents noting these improvements.

These findings underscore a significant shift towards flexibility, digital transformation, and a greater emphasis on employee well-being. The transition from traditional in-office settings to remote work environments necessitated the adoption of virtual recruitment and onboarding processes, continuous digital performance tracking, and online engagement and training programs. Leadership approaches evolved to prioritize empathy and flexibility, with a heightened focus on mental health support and job security. Workforce planning became more dynamic, integrating flexible work arrangements and reskilling initiatives to navigate the rapidly changing landscape.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated employee perceptions of talent management practices in the Thai hotel industry, focusing on Chiang Mai during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis showed no significant differences in perceptions based on gender, age, or marital status, but notable differences were observed in relation to work experience and average monthly income. Employees generally held positive views, with talent retention rated the highest, followed by performance evaluation, development, recruitment and selection, reward and recognition, and identification.

The degree of talent management in Chiang Mai's hotels was high, but there was a discrepancy between employee perceptions and the practical application of these practices. Employees saw talent retention as crucial, while business owners emphasized talent identification for post-pandemic recovery.

Comparing pre-pandemic and pandemic-era practices revealed a significant shift from traditional, in-person methods to remote and digital strategies. This transition highlighted the importance of flexibility, digital transformation, and a focus on mental health and job security, ensuring the industry's resilience and ability to adapt to new challenges. This study underscores the necessity for continued innovation in talent management to maintain organizational success and employee satisfaction in a dynamic global environment.

8. Discussion

The study on talent management in Thailand's hotel industry revealed no significant differences in employee opinions based on gender, age, or marital status, indicating that talent management practices are equitable and unbiased. These findings align with Sama-ae's 2019 research, which also found no significant differences in perceptions of talent management across these demographic variables. However, the study did find that employee perceptions varied based on average monthly salary and work experience. This variation suggests that

more experienced and higher-paid employees have different views on talent management practices, likely due to their greater familiarity with and benefits from these practices. These results corroborate findings by Sama-ae (2019) and Sankanak and Chamchong (2019), which highlighted the influence of work experience and income on employee perceptions of talent management.

Considering these disparities, it is essential for the hotel industry in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to adopt talent management practices that address differences in work experience and income, particularly in areas such as talent development, reward and recognition, and retention. This approach can promote a more equitable work environment, providing equal opportunities for growth and success to all employees.

Kehinde's 2012 study underscored the significant impact of talent management on employee satisfaction and performance. The current study focused on the correlation between employee perceptions and the actual talent management practices of hotels in Chiang Mai during the COVID-19 pandemic. It emphasized the importance of establishing clear standards and procedures for talent selection, as well as the necessity of ongoing competency development to maintain high performance, boost morale, and encourage long-term retention. The study highlighted talent retention as the most crucial aspect, with entrepreneurs valuing talented individuals and aiming to retain them for extended periods. This is supported by Younas and Waseem Bari (2020), who noted that retaining experienced employees is vital for organizational familiarity and stability.

Interestingly, the study revealed that talent identification had the lowest average score among talent management areas. This may be due to a lack of clear selection criteria or insufficient understanding among employees. Patanasamphan's 2020 research emphasized that well-planned and clearly defined selection criteria are fundamental for effective talent management. Identifying and developing talent is a critical first step in ensuring high-quality hires who meet organizational needs. Additionally, talent reward and recognition programs are essential for motivating and inspiring employees, while talent development enhances knowledge and abilities, aiding career advancement and organizational goal achievement.

The comparison between pre-pandemic and pandemic-era practices revealed a significant shift from traditional, in-person methods to remote and digital strategies. Before the pandemic, talent management practices relied heavily on in-person interactions, fixed schedules, and traditional methods. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a rapid transition to remote work, digital tools, and flexible working arrangements. This shift emphasized the importance of flexibility, digital transformation, and a focus on mental health and job security. The industry's ability to adapt to these new challenges underscores its resilience and the necessity for continued innovation in talent management practices.

In conclusion, this study highlights the need for tailored talent management strategies that consider employee differences in experience and income, promoting equitable growth opportunities. The shift towards remote and digital practices during the pandemic demonstrated the industry's capacity for adaptation and resilience, ensuring sustained organizational success and employee satisfaction in a dynamic global environment.

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