



## Optimizing Human Resource Management in the Front Office Department: A Study on Employee Engagement and Service Quality

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### ABSTRACT

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This research aims to explore how human resource management (HRM) strategies can be optimized to enhance employee engagement and service quality in the front office department of hotels. Using a qualitative research approach, this study collected data through semi-structured interviews with key managerial informants, including the Front Office Manager, Marketing Manager, and Human Resource Manager. The originality of this study lies in its managerial perspective, providing insights into the strategic implementation of HRM practices in hotel front office operations. The findings reveal that training and development, employee motivation and recognition, workload management, and interdepartmental coordination are critical to optimizing HRM in this department. However, challenges such as budget constraints, inconsistent reward systems, high job stress, and communication gaps hinder effectiveness. To address these issues, this study recommends the adoption of technology-driven training solutions, transparent performance-based incentives, AI-driven workforce scheduling, and digital communication platforms to improve service efficiency and employee satisfaction. The value of this research lies in its contribution to hospitality management literature by providing practical recommendations for enhancing HRM strategies in hotel front office operations. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of HRM strategies, leadership influence on employee engagement, and employee perspectives to further improve workforce management in the hospitality industry

## **INTRODUCTION**

The front office department plays a crucial role in the hotel industry, serving as the first point of contact for guests and shaping their overall experience. As the face of the hotel, front office employees are responsible for ensuring smooth check-in and check-out processes, handling guest inquiries, and resolving concerns efficiently. Given the highly customer-oriented nature of the job, the effectiveness of front office operations is largely dependent on the quality of human resource management (HRM) strategies (Abdou 2022). Hotels that invest in well-structured HRM practices, such as employee training, performance incentives, and career development, tend to achieve higher levels of service quality and guest satisfaction (Adhistyo, Hardiani, and ... 2021). However, managing human resources in this department presents significant challenges, including high employee turnover, workplace stress, and varying levels of service expectations from diverse guests.

Employee engagement plays a crucial role in shaping front office performance, as it directly impacts service quality, guest satisfaction, and overall operational efficiency. Highly engaged employees exhibit greater commitment, motivation, and a sense of belonging, leading to proactive customer service and stronger guest relationships (Aldabbas 2023). Research suggests that engagement is driven by several key HRM strategies, including a positive work culture, continuous learning opportunities, and structured recognition programs. A supportive work culture fosters collaboration, open communication, and trust between employees and management, creating an environment where staff feel valued and empowered to excel in their roles. Continuous professional development—through training programs, mentorship, and career advancement pathways—ensures that front office staff remain competent, confident, and adaptable to industry trends (Wijoyo et al. 2024). Additionally, recognition and reward systems, such as performance-based incentives, employee-of-the-month awards, and growth opportunities, significantly contribute to job satisfaction and retention. However, disengagement poses a serious challenge in hospitality, often resulting from high job demands, inadequate support, lack of career progression, and ineffective leadership (Hassan 2019). Employees experiencing disengagement are more likely to display low morale, absenteeism, and reduced service quality, ultimately affecting a hotel's reputation and guest loyalty (Octafian 2021). To counteract these risks, hotel managers must adopt strategic HRM interventions, such as employee feedback mechanisms, work-life balance initiatives, and personalized engagement programs, to ensure that front office employees remain motivated, productive, and committed to delivering high-quality service in an increasingly competitive industry (Agele, Shamram, and Faraj 2020).

Service quality is a fundamental driver of guest satisfaction and long-term hotel success, making it essential for hotels to implement HRM strategies that empower front office employees to deliver seamless, high-standard service. A well-trained and motivated workforce is more likely to handle guest interactions with professionalism, efficiency, and a customer-centric approach,

ultimately fostering positive guest experiences and brand loyalty (Kim, Han, and Ariza-Montes 2021). To achieve this, hotels must prioritize comprehensive training programs that cover not only technical skills—such as reservation management and complaint resolution—but also soft skills like emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, and problem-solving. Performance-based incentives, including financial rewards, career advancement opportunities, and skill-based promotions, serve as powerful motivators, encouraging employees to exceed service expectations (Ahmad 2019). Moreover, structured career progression pathways provide front office staff with a sense of purpose and long-term stability, reducing turnover and enhancing overall service consistency. Beyond individual performance, team collaboration and effective communication are crucial in ensuring smooth front office operations, especially during high-pressure situations like peak check-in periods and unexpected guest requests (Mukhtar, Risnita, and Prasetyo 2020). HRM strategies that promote cross-training, interdepartmental coordination, and real-time digital communication tools enable front office teams to work cohesively, swiftly addressing guest needs and operational challenges. Additionally, fostering a workplace culture that values adaptability and proactive problem-solving ensures that employees are equipped to handle dynamic hospitality environments with confidence (Anabila 2022). As guest expectations continue to evolve, hotels must continuously refine their HRM strategies to sustain service excellence, strengthen market positioning, and drive long-term financial performance.

Despite the well-documented benefits of strategic HRM in enhancing employee engagement and service quality, many hotels continue to face significant challenges in balancing operational efficiency and workforce management (Ayodele 2020). The inherently dynamic nature of the hospitality industry, marked by fluctuating occupancy rates, evolving guest expectations, and high staff turnover, requires hotels to adopt flexible yet robust HRM strategies that ensure both workforce stability and service consistency. One of the primary challenges is the seasonal nature of employment, which often leads to reliance on temporary or inexperienced staff, increasing the risk of service inconsistencies and guest dissatisfaction. Additionally, the front office operates as the face of the hotel, meaning that any inefficiencies in HRM—such as poor scheduling, lack of training, or ineffective communication—can directly impact guest perceptions and overall business performance (Akgunduz 2022). Many hotels struggle with allocating resources for continuous employee development while maintaining cost efficiency, often resulting in undertrained or overworked staff who are unable to meet high service expectations (Dewi et al. 2019). Furthermore, the rising demand for personalized guest experiences means that front office employees must be equipped with problem-solving skills, adaptability, and emotional intelligence, requiring more targeted HRM interventions. This study, therefore, seeks to examine how hotels can refine their HRM strategies to cultivate a highly engaged, motivated, and well-supported front office workforce while ensuring that service standards remain

consistently high, ultimately enhancing both employee well-being and guest satisfaction in an increasingly competitive industry.

The front office department is a critical component of hotel operations, directly influencing guest satisfaction and overall service quality. However, many hotels face challenges in managing human resources within this department, including high employee turnover, job dissatisfaction, and inconsistent service delivery. While HRM strategies such as training, performance incentives, and career development programs are implemented to address these issues, their effectiveness in enhancing employee engagement and service quality remains a concern. A disengaged workforce can lead to operational inefficiencies, reduced guest satisfaction, and a decline in the hotel's competitive advantage. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of the hospitality industry, with fluctuating occupancy rates and diverse guest expectations, requires adaptable and well-structured HRM strategies. Given these challenges, it is essential to explore how HRM practices can be optimized to foster employee engagement and improve service quality in the front office department. Therefore, the main research question of this study is: How can human resource management strategies be optimized to enhance employee engagement and service quality in the front office department of a hotel?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Human Resource Management Strategies in the Hospitality Industry**

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a fundamental driver of organizational success in the hospitality industry, particularly in front office operations, where employees serve as the first point of contact for guests and directly influence customer satisfaction and brand reputation (Aboramadan 2021). A well-structured HRM framework encompasses recruitment, onboarding, skill development, performance evaluations, and employee retention strategies, all of which contribute to a motivated and high-performing workforce. Targeted recruitment processes ensure that candidates possess not only the necessary technical skills but also strong interpersonal and problem-solving abilities, which are essential in handling guest inquiries, complaints, and special requests effectively (Ingersoll, May, and Collins 2019). Comprehensive training programs, focusing on both operational competencies and soft skills, enhance service consistency and employee confidence, leading to higher guest satisfaction rates (Bilan 2020). Performance evaluation systems that incorporate regular feedback, goal setting, and structured incentives help reinforce productivity while fostering a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth. Moreover, strategic HRM interventions, such as flexible scheduling, job rotation, career advancement pathways, and leadership development initiatives, play a pivotal role in reducing stress, preventing burnout, and increasing employee commitment (Ahmed 2020). Studies suggest that hotels that adopt proactive HRM policies, including well-being programs, recognition systems, and clear career progression opportunities, experience lower turnover rates and higher employee engagement, ultimately leading to improved service delivery and financial performance (Adam 2019). However, despite the proven benefits of these HRM strategies, many hotels continue to

face difficulties in balancing workforce well-being with operational efficiency (Williamson and Harris 2024), especially in high-demand environments where fluctuating occupancy levels, seasonal employment, and budget constraints complicate HRM implementation (Chung 2021). These challenges emphasize the urgent need for further research on optimizing HRM frameworks that are specifically tailored to the unique demands of front office employees, ensuring sustainable workforce management, superior service quality, and long-term competitive advantage in an increasingly dynamic hospitality landscape (Latchem-Hastings 2021).

### **Employee Engagement and Its Impact on Service Quality**

Employee engagement is a critical driver of service excellence in the hospitality sector, particularly in the front office, where employees serve as the face of the hotel and play a pivotal role in shaping guest experiences (Altinay et al. 2019). Engaged employees exhibit higher job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and greater intrinsic motivation, leading to exceptional customer service, proactive problem-solving, and enhanced adaptability in dynamic operational environments (Chela-Alvarez 2022). Research indicates that front office employees with high engagement levels are more resilient under pressure, demonstrate effective conflict resolution skills, and maintain a consistently positive attitude, all of which contribute to a seamless guest experience (Aryatmaja et al. 2021). Furthermore, hotels that prioritize engagement experience lower absenteeism, decreased turnover rates, and heightened overall productivity, reducing operational disruptions and recruitment costs. To foster engagement, HRM strategies should focus on empowerment initiatives, recognition programs, professional development opportunities, and workplace well-being policies that reinforce employees' sense of belonging and purpose (Agarwal 2021). Empowerment through decision-making autonomy, for example, allows front office employees to resolve guest concerns efficiently without excessive managerial oversight, fostering both confidence and accountability. Recognition and reward systems, such as incentive programs, career advancement pathways, and personalized development plans, reinforce employees' contributions and encourage long-term loyalty (Ramkissoon 2020). However, engagement remains a challenge in the hospitality industry due to long working hours, emotional labor, inconsistent compensation structures, and limited career progression, all of which can lead to burnout and disengagement. To mitigate these risks, hotels must implement a holistic HRM framework that integrates employee well-being initiatives, continuous learning opportunities, and a supportive work culture to ensure that front office staff remain motivated, valued, and committed to delivering superior guest experiences (Buehring 2019). By embedding engagement-driven HRM practices into their organizational strategy, hotels can cultivate a high-performance workforce, sustain service quality, and strengthen their competitive advantage in an increasingly demanding hospitality landscape.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore how human resource management (HRM) strategies can be optimized to enhance employee engagement and service quality in the front office department. A qualitative approach is suitable for this research because it allows for an in-depth understanding of managerial perspectives, experiences, and strategic decision-making processes within the hotel industry. By focusing on the insights of key managerial stakeholders, this study aims to uncover patterns, challenges, and best practices in HRM specific to the front office department. The research design will be exploratory, as it seeks to investigate the underlying factors influencing HR strategies, employee engagement, and service quality without imposing predefined hypotheses. Through qualitative inquiry, this study will generate rich, descriptive data that provide deeper insights into the operational and strategic aspects of HRM within hotel front office departments.

The data collection method will primarily involve semi-structured interviews with key managerial informants in the hotel industry, including the Front Office Manager, Marketing Manager, and Human Resource Manager. These individuals were chosen because they possess critical insights into HR strategies, employee management, and service quality in the front office department. The Front Office Manager is responsible for overseeing daily operations, monitoring staff performance, and ensuring guest satisfaction, making them a key informant on operational challenges and workforce engagement. The Marketing Manager plays a crucial role in understanding guest expectations and market trends, which influence HR strategies and service quality. The Human Resource Manager is responsible for designing and implementing HR policies, including recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and retention strategies. By gathering perspectives from these three managerial roles, this study will provide a comprehensive view of how HRM strategies impact employee engagement and service quality in the front office.

The data collection process will involve in-depth, one-on-one interviews with each informant, conducted either in person or via virtual platforms, depending on their availability. The interviews will be semi-structured, allowing flexibility for follow-up questions while ensuring that core topics such as HR policies, employee engagement strategies, training programs, and service quality management are covered. Each interview is expected to last between 45 to 60 minutes and will be recorded (with participant consent) for accurate transcription and analysis. Additionally, secondary data sources such as HR policy documents, employee training manuals, and service quality reports may be reviewed to complement the interview findings. This multi-source approach will strengthen the credibility of the study by cross-referencing managerial insights with documented policies and practices.

For data analysis, this study will utilize thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative technique for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns within textual data. The interview transcripts will be systematically coded to extract key themes related to HRM strategies, employee engagement, and service quality. Thematic categories will be developed based on recurring

concepts, managerial perspectives, and industry best practices. By analyzing the relationships between different themes, this study aims to generate meaningful insights into how HRM strategies can be optimized to improve employee motivation and service performance in the front office department. Ensuring research rigor, member checking will be conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants for validation, enhancing the reliability and accuracy of the study. Through this qualitative methodology, the study seeks to provide practical recommendations for hotel managers on effective HRM strategies tailored to front office operations.

## **RESULT**

The findings of this study reveal several key themes related to human resource management (HRM) strategies, employee engagement, and service quality in the front office department. First, training and development emerged as a crucial HRM strategy implemented by hotels to enhance front office employee performance. The Front Office Manager emphasized the importance of continuous training programs focusing on customer service, problem-solving, and communication skills. The HR Manager highlighted that structured training sessions, combined with on-the-job coaching, have a direct impact on service quality and guest satisfaction. However, challenges such as time constraints and budget limitations often hinder the implementation of comprehensive training programs.

Second, the study found that employee motivation and recognition play a significant role in fostering engagement and retention within the front office department. The HR Manager reported that performance-based incentives, employee appreciation programs, and career advancement opportunities are commonly used strategies to keep staff motivated. However, the Marketing Manager noted that while some recognition programs are effective, inconsistencies in reward distribution and limited promotional pathways can lead to employee dissatisfaction and turnover. Additionally, a lack of personalized engagement strategies was cited as a factor contributing to lower morale among front office employees.

Third, the findings indicate that workload management and job stress significantly impact employee engagement and service quality. The Front Office Manager noted that high occupancy periods and unpredictable guest demands often create stressful working conditions for employees. The HR Manager acknowledged that while scheduling and shift rotation strategies are in place to manage workload distribution, staff shortages and peak-hour pressures remain persistent challenges. Many employees reported experiencing burnout due to prolonged working hours and the emotional demands of handling guest complaints and special requests.

Lastly, the study revealed that interdepartmental coordination and communication are critical to maintaining high service quality in the front office. The Marketing Manager emphasized the need for seamless communication between the front office and other departments, such as housekeeping and food and beverage, to ensure smooth guest experiences.

However, the findings suggest that miscommunication and delays in information flow often lead to service inefficiencies. The Front Office Manager pointed out that adopting digital communication tools and holding regular interdepartmental meetings have improved collaboration, but challenges still arise due to varying levels of responsiveness across departments.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings emphasize that training and development are fundamental in enhancing front office service quality, reinforcing existing research that highlights the critical role of continuous professional development in the hospitality sector. Well-structured training programs equip employees with stronger communication skills, effective problem-solving techniques, and refined guest interaction abilities, all of which contribute to a smoother and more personalized guest experience. However, despite these advantages, many hotels struggle to allocate sufficient time and resources for ongoing training due to budget constraints, high operational demands, and workforce scheduling challenges. As a result, employees often lack access to consistent upskilling opportunities, which can lead to stagnation in service quality and lower engagement levels. One effective solution is the adoption of technology-driven learning methods, such as e-learning platforms, virtual simulations, and AI-powered training modules, which allow front office employees to access interactive and scenario-based training at their convenience, minimizing disruptions to daily operations. Additionally, mentorship programs and cross-training initiatives can be introduced to foster peer learning, leadership development, and multi-skill proficiency, ensuring that employees remain engaged, adaptable, and prepared to handle diverse guest needs. By integrating flexible and cost-effective training solutions, hotels can maintain a well-equipped workforce, sustain high service standards, and enhance overall guest satisfaction, ultimately strengthening their competitive advantage in an evolving hospitality landscape.

The study also emphasizes the significance of employee motivation and recognition in fostering engagement and retention, supporting the argument that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards influence job satisfaction (Kim et al., 2020). The use of incentives such as bonuses, employee-of-the-month awards, and career progression pathways contributes to a positive workplace culture where employees feel valued. However, the inconsistency in reward distribution and limited promotional opportunities suggest that some HR policies may not be fully aligned with employee expectations. To address this, hotels should consider implementing transparent performance evaluation systems that clearly outline reward criteria, ensuring fairness in recognition. Moreover, personalized engagement initiatives, such as tailored career development plans and peer recognition programs, can further strengthen motivation and reduce the risk of disengagement.

The findings reaffirm that workload management and job stress are significant factors influencing employee well-being and service performance in the front office, particularly during peak occupancy periods and high-pressure situations. Consistent with prior research, burnout and emotional exhaustion

emerge as prevalent challenges in the hospitality industry, often resulting from long working hours, demanding guest interactions, and unpredictable workloads. While shift rotation and scheduling adjustments are commonly used to alleviate stress, persistent staff shortages and inefficient workforce distribution frequently lead to overburdened employees, reduced job satisfaction, and diminished service quality. To address these challenges, hotels must adopt data-driven workforce optimization strategies, such as AI-driven demand forecasting tools, which can predict peak occupancy trends, optimize staffing levels, and reduce the likelihood of employee fatigue. Additionally, integrating employee well-being initiatives, including stress management workshops, mindfulness training, and access to mental health support services, can provide proactive coping mechanisms for front office staff, helping them navigate workplace pressures more effectively. Encouraging a supportive work culture, fostering team collaboration, and implementing workload-sharing mechanisms can further reduce individual stress while maintaining high service standards. By balancing operational efficiency with employee well-being, hotels can cultivate a more engaged, resilient, and high-performing front office team, ultimately enhancing guest satisfaction and reinforcing long-term workforce sustainability.

Finally, the study underscores the importance of interdepartmental coordination and communication in maintaining high service standards in the front office. Effective collaboration between departments such as housekeeping, food and beverage, and concierge services ensures smooth guest experiences, reinforcing the role of internal communication in operational efficiency. However, challenges related to miscommunication and delayed responsiveness indicate that existing communication channels may not be fully effective. To overcome this, hotels should adopt integrated digital communication platforms, such as centralized hotel management systems and mobile apps, to facilitate real-time information sharing between departments. Furthermore, regular interdepartmental meetings and cross-functional training can enhance teamwork and understanding of different operational challenges, fostering a more cohesive service delivery approach.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This study concludes that optimizing human resource management (HRM) strategies in the front office department is essential for enhancing employee engagement and service quality in hotels. The findings highlight that continuous training and development, employee motivation and recognition, workload management, and interdepartmental coordination are critical factors influencing front office performance. However, challenges such as budget constraints for training, inconsistent reward systems, job stress, and communication gaps persist, affecting both employee satisfaction and guest experiences. To address these issues, hotels should invest in technology-driven training solutions such as e-learning platforms and virtual simulations to provide flexible learning opportunities for employees. Additionally, transparent performance-based incentive programs should be implemented to ensure fair recognition and career growth, thereby increasing motivation and retention. To manage workload

effectively, hotels can adopt AI-driven workforce scheduling tools that optimize staff allocation during peak periods, reducing burnout and enhancing service efficiency. Furthermore, improving interdepartmental communication through integrated digital platforms and regular cross-departmental training can strengthen collaboration and operational efficiency. By adopting these strategic HRM enhancements, hotels can create a more engaged workforce, leading to superior guest experiences, improved employee retention, and a stronger competitive advantage in the hospitality industry.

### **FURTHER STUDY**

Future research should explore the long-term impact of optimized HRM strategies on employee engagement and service quality in the front office department by conducting longitudinal studies that track changes over time. Additionally, examining the role of organizational culture and leadership styles in shaping employee motivation and performance could provide deeper insights into effective HRM practices. Given the increasing integration of technology in hospitality, further studies could investigate the effectiveness of AI-driven HR solutions, such as automated scheduling, digital training platforms, and performance analytics, in improving workforce management. Comparative studies across different hotel categories, such as luxury, mid-scale, and budget hotels, could also reveal how HRM strategies vary depending on service expectations and operational challenges. Lastly, expanding the scope of research to include employee perspectives, rather than focusing solely on managerial insights, could offer a more comprehensive understanding of HRM effectiveness and identify gaps that need to be addressed to achieve sustainable improvements in employee engagement and service quality.

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