

Strategic steps for Nigerian hospitality human capital development

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore human capital (HC) productivity strategies used by the tourism, hospitality, and leisure (THL) industry business leaders in Nigeria which improved the employee productivity.

Design/methodology/approach – The participants in this research study comprised randomly selected Southern Nigerian business leaders with specialist expertise in the THL industry. Individual interviews were undertaken with participants to gain both an insight and understanding regarding which strategies are best suited to improve employee productivity. A further analysis of workplace policies and procedures provided additional insights related to the application of such workplace practices toward productivity improvements.

Findings – The findings of this study identified that recruiting persons with essential social capital, inducting them into high ethical standards, providing in-house training, motivating employees with reward and recognition, and the adoption of affordable technologies are key industry strategies to build a productive employee workforce.

Practical implications – Implementing the findings from this study may help develop a new type of THL professionals, especially in the hotel and restaurant sub-sectors that will enhance the attractiveness of the THL industry and encourage patronage. The opportunity to interact with new people in THL businesses and locations may promote social interaction and integration that are invaluable to an ethnically and religiously diverse country such as Nigeria. These benefits are valuable and are essential positive social changes.

Originality/value – A structured HCD program might deliver a net benefit to the industry. To the employees, there may be improved remuneration, increased self-esteem, and job security. To the industry, there may be a reduction in employee turnover, improvement in productivity, improved attraction of graduates, and reduced engagement of illegal workers. The government could also experience increased gross domestic product.

Keywords Human capital productivity strategies, Improved employee productivity, Tourism, hospitality, and leisure industry, Workplace policies and procedures

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

An important factor of productivity is the human capital (HC). The enactment of a business opportunity and the cognitive conception of its day-to-day operations require astute management and a dexterous, productive employee frontline. A competent workforce is imperative because of customers' demands and other dynamic market forces (Kim and Park, 2014). While business owners and shareholders are often conscious to recruit competent managerial staff, the competence of the customer service personnel, such as those within the tourism, hospitality, and leisure (THL) industry, often received lesser attention (Kim and Park, 2014; Lopes and Teixeira, 2013; Scott and Dwyer, 2017). Investors in a human-intensive and people-focused industry such as the THL need to ensure frontline customer-service personnel are trained adequately to deliver quality services and high productivity; however, such is not always the industry practice (Chen *et al.*, 2013).

Financial performance in business is intricately dependent on employee productivity within the organization (Chen *et al.*, 2013). The THL industry forecast noted that the



US\$7 trillion industry accounts for 9.5 percent global gross domestic product (GDP) and employs 266 million people (World Tourism Organization Network, 2015; World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2015b). However, the industry could stand to lose approximately 14 million jobs and \$610 billion GDP by 2,024 due to a skill shortage (World Economic Forum, 2015; WTTC, 2015b). Skilled HC has become a strategic theme and needed in the THL industry. More specifically, the THL industry is deficient in terms of structured employee competency development programs for customer service personnel (Kim and Park, 2014; Lopes and Teixeira, 2013). Typically, the THL industry experiences high employee turnover (Pearlman and Schaffer, 2013) and below average attraction for potential employees (Wang and Huang, 2014). Leaders of some THL organizations need strategic human resource management practices to improve corporate financial performance while enhancing employee productivity and averting a future loss of labor.

Highly effective HC is essential to productivity (Luckstead *et al.*, 2014). Prior authors' research underscored the importance of human capital development (HCD) to productivity and business performance (Anca-Ioana, 2013; Darwish *et al.*, 2013). The authors further emphasized the need to conduct additional studies on HCD in non-Western economies, especially the predominantly unskilled Sub-Saharan Africa (Anca-Ioana, 2013; Danquah and Ouattara, 2014). Thus, the focus of this research was the THL industry within Nigeria. The industry is strategic to job creation, to poverty alleviation, and to the development of sub-Saharan Africa countries (Chun-Ming *et al.*, 2014; Pearlman and Schaffer, 2013; World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2015a). Jakada and Gambo (2014) also recommended that the Nigerian hotel industry should pay appropriate attention to internal capabilities to respond to, and to meet market needs. Based on these calls, exploring the strategies THL leaders in Nigeria utilized to improve productivity and to retain the HC in the industry is imperative.

Research question

The global THL industry position will decline by 14 million jobs and US\$610 billion GDP by 2,024 due to a deficit of skilled HC (WTTC, 2015b). Developing HC yields a 13 percent internal rate of return (IRR) and contributed up to 61.5 percent of US productivity from 1952 to 2000 (Lopes and Teixeira, 2013; Luckstead *et al.*, 2014). This research paper explored what HCD strategies have THL leaders in Nigeria used to improve employee productivity?

Methodology/limitation

The research followed a qualitative methodology, since the intention of the research was to explore the what and how of a real-life system with information from different sources (Bailey, 2014; Cameron *et al.*, 2013; Pettigrew, 2013); and involved the use of semi-structured recorded interview-based discussions with a purposeful selection of business leaders to explore the topic (Bhati *et al.*, 2014; Sinden *et al.*, 2013). This choice posed some limitations since the selection of participants was limited to industry experts who were in leadership positions within the THL industry in Southern Nigeria, which is underdeveloped in comparison to more developed regions in Africa (WTTC, 2015a).

Conceptually

In this study, HC theory was chosen since it has two propositions, which hold relevance in relation to the how the paper focused its lens to conduct the research. Labor input is both quantitative and qualitative, the latter being the skillfulness or deftness demonstrated in performing work (Sweetland, 1996); the second is formal and informal education which increases the capability and productivity of people, and is quantifiable in monetary terms,

and is the utmost investment in a human being (Sweetland, 1996). As well, many researchers have applied the theory as the foundation for discussions on wage inequalities and organizational productivity (Chen, 2013; Huffman, 2013; Inoue *et al.*, 2013).

Literature review

With a focused lens of the human capital theory, this paper explored the topic of HCD in service organizations, especially within the THL organizations to address the central research question.

As a dimension of productivity, HCD may be evident in improvement related to the quality of service delivered by employees; when quality is an outcome of productivity (Mahapatra, 2014). While management seek high productivity, customers demand quality service (Bhavani, 2013). Customer expectation could be more challenging in the THL industry because customers are from different cultures, and they have different travel behaviors (Hsu *et al.*, 2013). Management needs to identify what constitutes quality service in the THL industry and aspire to deliver such quality to customers while simultaneously demanding high productivity from employees.

People view hospitality from different perspectives (Melissen, 2013). Therefore, defining hospitality may provide a framework for approaching a strategy for HCD which practitioners in the industry could utilize. As well, THL employees must be able to meet the expectations and demands of local and international patrons since clients and the local community play important roles in tourism and hospitality (Chun-Ming *et al.*, 2014). However, the schools of thought which define hospitality, the providers and the recipients of the services should be important consideration in developing such a strategy (Georgiadis and Pitelis, 2012). Since, employees must be competent and capable of meeting expectations; this requirement implies that the employees' development should be paramount to the business leaders, first and foremost.

The THL industry as a global economic activity contributes trillions of dollars annually and employs millions worldwide (Chun-Ming *et al.*, 2014). The industry experiences keen internal competition among players; and managers face the daunting task of delivering excellent service to customers whose expectations increase with knowledge and technology. A notable challenge is the lack of THL-focused training programs to develop practitioners in the industry (Chen *et al.*, 2013; Iancu *et al.*, 2013; Melissen, 2013). The result is an adverse effect on the perception of the industry, corporate productivity, and financial performance. As a result, the potential contributions of the industry to economic development and poverty alleviation in developing regions of the world remain untapped.

Research is indispensable to understanding the place of the THL industry (Hjalager, 2015). According to Hjalager (2015), research and the interest of policymakers are essential to innovation to develop the THL industry. For example, researchers have shown that THL services derive significant benefits from policies favorable to tourism (Ogarlaci, 2012). A staggering 78 percent of tourists will require lodging, and will have positive spillover demand on restaurant services (Anamaria and Maria-Cristina, 2013; Chun-Ming *et al.*, 2014). A country such as Nigeria, with a fledgling THL industry, which mainly consists of lodging and restaurants would benefit from this research. The government could make favorable and economically beneficial policies with valid recommendations from industry-focused research.

The THL industry in sub-Saharan Africa especially Nigeria, is particularly in need. The local THL industry is not immune to the prevalent situation in other regions of the world. For instance, the 2015 WTTC report on benchmarking travel and tourism showed that the number of international visitors to Nigeria declined by about 50 percent from 2010 to 2011. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, but the country THL industry ranked poorly overall at 131 out of 141 countries in the global benchmark (WTTC, 2015a). The prioritization of travel and tourism, and by extension the hospitality subsector,

was lower in Nigeria than in other countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region (WTTC, 2015a). The country's human resources and the labor market were among the worst globally (WTTC, 2015a). Thus, both government and academia need to give more focus to THL to turn the fate of the Nigerian THL industry in a positive direction.

Among the prevalent themes in the THL industry are poor remuneration, job insecurity, lack of professionalism, lack of commitment to the industry, and high employee turnover (Chun-Ming *et al.*, 2014). Practices in the hospitality industry appear hamper the maximization of strategic benefits of the HCR in the industry and the potential advantages of the industry to society, and Southern Nigeria. Furthermore, the development of any industry to the point of providing worthy careers for the teeming world population requires structured professional development. Career development enhances the commitment to an industry and may reduce employee turnover and improve productivity. Players in the service sector must be competent to understand and meet the demand of local and international customers whose choices depend on diverse factors (Shemma, 2014). Human Resources in the THL industry, therefore, require research focused on areas that can improve productivity and retention.

Focusing on the HR and the labor market as a THL industry competitiveness indicator, the Nigerian THL workforce scores less than three on a scale of seven (WTTC, 2015a). While Nigeria occupies the seventh position among 141 countries globally in employee hiring and firing practices, the country ranks 102 in the ease of recruiting skilled employees (WTTC, 2015a). The implication of these data may be that organizations in the Nigerian THL industry hire unskilled labor, provide internal training, keep the competent employees within their organization, and fire the rest. Focusing on the benchmark outcome on HR and labor market sub-indices, Nigeria ranked 48 and 50 globally, respectively, in staff training, as well as pay and productivity (WTTC, 2015a). The scores on these indices were better than the global position of the whole industry and somewhat corroborates the hire and fire interpretation. The industry needs to study what successful managers do to develop their HCR to enhance productivity instead of hiring and firing unskilled laborers.

Understanding the strategic HCD practices managers in the hospitality industry should adopt is essential to turning the HR metrics toward the positive direction and enhance staff commitment, productivity, and corporate financial performance. This study was a response to the earlier recommendations to inquire the strategic role of HCD in business (Anca-Ioana, 2013; Darwish *et al.*, 2013; Phipps *et al.*, 2013), particularly in the unskilled non-Western economies such as the Sub-Saharan Africa (Danquah and Ouattara, 2014). The study was about the THL industry because the industry creates employment and is strategic to poverty alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa countries (Chun-Ming *et al.*, 2014; Pearlman and Schaffer, 2013). Jakada and Gambo (2014) also noted that paying specific attention to the internal capabilities in the hospitality industry is essential. Implementing the recommendations of this study may constitute a timely response to forestall the imminent skill shortage and potential loss in the GDP which the THL industry currently contributes to the Nigerian economy.

The implications of HCD to THL employees

Enhances employees' productivity

Productive workers are the primary evidence of an organization's HCD program. HC are the stock of abilities, knowledge, skills, social assets, and values acquired and developed through educational processes (Khan *et al.*, 2015). The educational process may be schooling, training, and professional programs, through which a person can gain knowledge that translates to productivity (Khan *et al.*, 2015). Employees first realize these values in themselves before they convert such values to organizational productivity, personal benefit, and societal development (Schulz *et al.*, 2013; Scott and Dwyer, 2017). Hotels with structured and elaborate training plans differentiated themselves from the competition and paraded

stronger and more motivated workforce (Ubeda-Garcia *et al.*, 2013). For this reason, such hotels enjoyed more customer loyalty with lesser complaints, and the chief executives have a perception of higher productivity (Ubeda-Garcia *et al.*, 2013). To this end, hotels' training schemes should focus boosting staff productivity, reinforcing organizational culture, and increasing staff responsibilities in the organization (Ubeda-Garcia *et al.*, 2013). Such a focus on HRD could contribute to higher productivity as previously experienced in Saudi Arabia (Sillah, 2015). HRD could also influence the translation of an organization's leadership style to positive business performance (Alsughayir, 2014).

Improves employees' earning

The level of education a person attains could have an influence on an individual's income. Koerselman and Uusitalo (2014) analyzed the risk and benefit of HC investments through a correlation between the levels of education and lifetime income using secondary data of residents of Finland from 1988 to 2009. With HCT as the theoretical framework for estimating the lifetime income of a population, Koerselman and Uusitalo determined that education produces marketable skills but that investment in education is not without risks. University education yielded substantially higher lifetime income when compared with vocational high school and basic mandatory level of education, but the difference in the latter areas was not significant (Koerselman and Uusitalo, 2014). Thus, higher income appears to correlate with a greater level of education.

Cornacchione and Daugherty (2013) and Mertens and Röbbken (2013) supported this argument quantitatively by investigating the benefits of postsecondary education, particularly with respect to the financial return. A common inference by the two pairs of authors, Cornacchione and Daugherty, and Mertens and Robken was that differences in people's earnings could be a result of the differences in their HC. The HC differences could be economic, cultural, technical, or communicative (Cornacchione and Daugherty, 2013; Mertens and Röbbken, 2013). Education is an investment that attracts cost in the present, but that increases work productivity and the lifetime income of the educated (Mertens and Röbbken, 2013). For instance, Mertens and Robken noted that although remuneration varies between industries, doctorate holders earn higher wages and spend longer hours at work. Employees with high HC could influence their organization to receive high compensation based on their past performance. An example was the pay levels achieved by college football coaches during the global financial crisis (Inoue *et al.*, 2013).

Other authors also contributed to the argument that there is a positive relationship between HC and total compensation. Inoue *et al.* (2013) concurred but added that the relationship was an inverse proportion with increasing bonus. Tamasauskiene and Poteliene (2013) evaluated the IRR on HCD in Lithuania compared with other countries and determined that persons who benefited from a government education subsidy have a higher IRR. Government-educated persons had an IRR from 12.2 to 14 percent while uneducated persons had a IRR ranging from 8.4 to 9.8 percent (Tamasauskiene and Poteliene, 2013). The maximum IRR achieved by an uneducated person was below the minimum realized by the educated, which supported the notion that education plays a role in wage differentials (Inoue *et al.*, 2013; Tamasauskiene and Poteliene, 2013).

Notably, the knowledge and competence of employees may not be the only or the most significant reason for good business performance. I-Shuo *et al.* (2012) observed that for hotels, location was the utmost factor, followed in sequence by security, price, room, the front desk, service quality, and facilities. Arasli (2012) named leadership as an important factor affecting THL industry business performance, while other authors listed innovation (Kanten and Yaşlıoğlu, 2012; Nagy, 2012). Some others identified food quality, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy (Marinescu and Ispas, 2012; Ramseook-Munhurrin, 2012). These authors explored different areas of the THL businesses in various regions of the

world but not in West Africa, which supports the need for similar studies in this region of world. Meanwhile, the importance of HC resonated through each of the factors the authors enumerated. Thus, a study focused on HCD might yield an additional understanding of how the THL industry in Nigeria could leverage HCD to improve the factors.

Analysis/findings

To further ensure relevancy in the research, the research employed methodological triangulation by comparing data from different categories within the THL industry, including an analysis across the leadership hierarchy of the industry, and its leaders. To ensure a robust analysis, included was additional data from two sub regions of Southern Nigeria, a comparison of data gathered during the interview process, on-site observations, and a content analysis of organizational data.

To support data analysis, the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen methodology as proposed by Moustakas (1994) enabled the generation of 236 significant statements from the interviews, which were codes and grouped into 17 themes identified in the literature. Five of the themes emerging from the study primarily addressed the research question. The other 12 themes did not address the research question directly but related to the main themes when viewed in the context of the literature, the conceptual framework, and the actual experiences of the participants. In terms of the research question, the themes fell into three broad categories: challenges, strategies, and business outcomes. We further classified the challenges into macroeconomic and microeconomic themes in alignment with the literature. The frequencies of the challenges, the strategies, and the business outcomes themes are depicted in Table I; while the appropriate themes are identified in Table II.

The findings of this study are consistent with the position of Seong-O and Patterson (2014) that research related to HCD should consider three levels: the individual

Table I.
Frequency of themes
on HCD in
Southern Nigeria

Categories of themes	Frequency	Percentage of total
Challenges		
Macroeconomic	53	22.46
Microeconomic	28	11.86
Strategies	82	33.90
Business outcomes	74	31.78
Total	236	100.00

Table II.
Themes on HCD in
Southern Nigeria

Challenges	Themes	Business outcomes
	Strategies	
Macroeconomic	Microeconomic	
Policy and governance failures	Character of potential employees	Remuneration, reward, and recognition
Insecurity	Lack of interest in THL as a career	Training
Negative industry perception		Resourcing practices and use of temporary workers
Poor power infrastructure		Technology
	Institutionalizing ethics and compliance	Customer satisfaction
		Cost escalation
		Slow growth

(supply side), the organization (demand side), and the country (supply and demand sides). The microeconomic challenges themes, the strategies and business outcome themes, and the macroeconomic challenges themes fitted these categories, respectively. Additionally, as noted in Table I, the occurrence of THL industry challenges themes at the country (demand and supply) level nearly doubled those at the employees (supply) at the microeconomic level. As well, the findings further indicated that in formulating strategies for the THL industry, industry leaders should give attention to challenges and the expected or resulting business outcomes; the overall thematic occurrences in the three areas were near equal at 33.90, 34.32, and 31.78 percent, respectively (see Table I). The findings also affirmed the argument of other authors that favorable policy and governance are indispensable to expected industry outcomes at the macroeconomic, organizational, and microeconomic levels (Fayos-Solá *et al.*, 2014; Moscardo, 2014; Panahi *et al.*, 2015). The interview questions tailored toward human capacity development and corporate productivity. Nonetheless, the participants mentioned macroeconomic challenges a fifth (22.46 percent) of the time (see Tables I, III and IV).

Discussion of findings

Resourcing practices and use of temporary workers

Pearlman and Schaffer (2013) argued that recruiting and retaining quality employees is cardinal to corporate business success. When THL industry leaders responded to “how can THL leaders make the industry attractive to future employees?” a common response was the lack of a structured remuneration scale, similar to what was obtainable in the Nigerian civil service. Many graduates that could have joined the industry, consider such an industry practice as demotivating. To achieve corporate objectives, the majority of THL industry leaders in Southern Nigeria identified peculiar competencies when recruiting employees. Faced with the challenge of an unpopular career destination, the THL industry operators look for individuals with good character although such individuals likely possess

Table III.
Frequency of THL
HCD macroeconomic
and microeconomic
challenges themes

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage of subtotal	Percentage of total
<i>Macroeconomic</i>			
Policy and governance failures	25	30.86	10.59
Insecurity	12	14.81	5.08
Negative industry perception	8	9.88	3.39
Poor power infrastructure	8	9.88	3.39
<i>Microeconomic</i>			
Character of potential employees	16	19.75	6.78
Lack of interest in THL as a career	12	14.81	5.08
Subtotal	81	100.00	34.32

Table IV.
Frequency of THL
HCD business
outcomes themes

HCD business outcomes	Count	Percentage of subtotal	Percentage of total
Employee productivity	22	29.33	9.32
Corporate reputation	16	21.33	6.78
Turnover	13	17.33	5.51
Customer satisfaction	10	13.33	4.24
Cost escalation	8	10.67	3.39
Slow growth	6	8.00	2.54
Total	75	100.00	31.78

lesser qualifications. The industry also engaged temporary, contingent, and contract employees such as students, specialist school graduates whose highest qualification were secondary school completion, or a diploma, and whose prospects in the large and favorite employment destinations (Nachmias and Walmsley, 2015) are narrow.

Recruitment of persons of good character. Throughout the interview process, commonly stated was the notion that a prospective candidate's character was more importance than qualifications. As respondents noted getting the right people with the correct mix of skills is important. Most participants also added that requisite was the level of trust in the workers that you have, and in that case, it was imperative to recruit people who are honest, people who will tell the truth, and people who will do the service. This strategy aligns with another finding in this study that the most significant microeconomic challenge facing the industry was the character of potential employee (see Table III). The strategy further aligns with the qualitative dimension of the HC framework (Sweetland, 1996), which identified that persons having social and HC would possess intellectual capital. Such persons would have the ability to deliver a pleasant tourism and hospitality experience that would positively influence an organization's performance (Teo *et al.*, 2014). Mulvaney and Hurd (2015) integrated the views of four other authors and deemed that parks and recreation professionals face more challenging and dynamic operating environment than other professionals since their job activities depend on the fluctuating needs and comfort of their clients. Therefore, an argument could be made that employees in the THL industry ought to be persons possessing good communication, social, and interpersonal skills (Lee and Tsang, 2013; Mulvaney and Hurd, 2015) to respond appropriately to satisfy the customer (a desirable business outcome, see Table II).

Recruitment of temporary workers. The THL industry, particularly, faces the challenge of enlisting and retaining high potential and high-quality employees. The reasons for the high turnover includes working conditions, compensation, and hospitality students' shallow appreciation of the demand of the industry before graduation (Brown *et al.*, 2015; Hertzman *et al.*, 2015; Nachmias and Walmsley, 2015). Therefore, industry leaders recruit labor through different means including engaging temporary service workers, international workers, and illegal foreign workers (Pearlman and Schaffer, 2013).

In fact, participants made a similar submission stating that THL is an industry that can make use of temporary skills and temporary staffing; and that the industry engages undergraduate students as nonpermanent staff supervised by a few skilled personnel, which is in line with the observation of Joo-Ee (2016) that industry leaders could hire more part-time workers and temporary work agencies to manage the increase in wages and the cost of full-time employees' fringe benefits. In fact, the THL industry provides many job opportunities such as seasonal and flexible jobs for persons seeking for such positions (Arionesei *et al.*, 2014) without the burden of full benefits placed on the employer.

Recruiting temporary employees affords THL industry leaders and the temporary employees opportunities to develop industry HC and acquire valuable skills, respectively in alignment with the research question and the conceptual framework. Exposing students to the THL life while at school engenders the necessary interest and appreciation that could make the temporary employee or student pursue a career in the industry (Brown *et al.*, 2015).

Preference for graduates of specialist schools. In this study, the leaders interviewed stated a preference for students from specialist schools even though such institutions were few in number. Specialized training institutions were viewed as encouraging, since such institutions offered the opportunity to recruit specialty trades such as chefs, and thus,

these trades were considered as a specialist pool in the industry; therefore, such skilled employees ranked among the top salary earners. Such industry views support the argument of Teo *et al.* (2014) that the HC of small-to medium-sized service organization is the product they sell, which in turn supports such a recruitment strategy within the THL industry. However, Welch *et al.* (2015) argued otherwise stating that job self-efficacy between specialists such as certified parks and recreation professionals and those not certified had no significant difference.

This finding complemented another finding that the lack of interest (see Table II) is a challenge to the THL industry, and agreed with the earlier finding of Nachmias and Walmsley (2015) that hospitality students could be indecisive in the career they wanted to pursue, which may lead some potential employees to lack the essential interest, which the industry considers important. Completing a hospitality-related course of study might not be an indication of requisite interest in the profession (Nachmias and Walmsley, 2015), a point echoed by those interviewed that when there is no passion for the industry; there is a need to convince potential employees to join the industry.

Remuneration, reward and recognition

In congruence with the submission that only 18 percent of hospitality employees considered the industry salary satisfactory (Joo-Ee, 2016), the most applied strategy employed by THL leaders to develop HC for the industry was remuneration, reward, and recognition (14.83 percent occurrence on Table V). Within the Southern Nigeria THL industry, respondents noted that HR uses salary and service charge incentives, which give some punch or zeal to encourage employees do their best. Respondents further noted that when the THL industry employees are productive, the recognition of skills, recognition of team working, recognition of effectiveness in one's role, and recognition of leadership skills are all rewarded. Thus, the current reward types underscored the assertion as noted by Joo-Ee (2016) that hospitality employee are more fascinated by allowances than basic salary because hospitality leaders could adjust fringe benefits to compensate for a change in salary if mandated to comply with minimum wage requirements. Further comments by those interviewed noted that the THL industry has a way of rewarding staff. It is secret; it is not an open system. Staffs that have were viewed as star performers were well rewarded by bonuses. Such a practice was not public due to the transient nature of the business, and the fact that performance rises and falls with the economy.

In contrast to some respondent's comments, it was further noted stated that when THL organizations have an open reward system, it encourages employees to take the initiative to improve their personal qualifications to stand-out beyond their fellow working colleagues; and reinforces that concept by rewarding such behavior publicly. As well, those interviewed noted that they recognize employees that maintain decorum; "we give a financial incentive for good performance." For instance, "there is a financial incentive for having no accident

Table V.
Frequency of THL
HCD strategy themes

Organizational strategic themes	Count	Percentage of subtotal	Percentage of total
Remuneration, reward and recognition	35	43.75	14.83
Resourcing practices and use of temporary workers	23	28.75	9.75
Training	15	18.75	6.36
Technology	4	5.00	1.69
Ethics and compliance	3	3.75	1.27
Total	80	100	33.90

incidents, which is designed to encourage the prevention of accidents.” In Southern Nigeria, THL establishments offer a compensation structure, which includes pay and non-pay incentives: free accommodation, profit sharing and commissions that may place employees above the national minimum wage level, which is a point noted by Joo-Ee (2016). In addition, THL organizational leaders could offer financial incentives to the frontline personnel so that such employees can achieve similar motivational levels.

Training

Training appeared as the most utilized methodology to develop staff in all organizations, which Arionesei *et al.* (2014) identified as a precondition for creativity and innovation when done appropriately with the right theoretical and practical content. Within the THL industry, training increases HCD; and employee productivity (Sandulli *et al.*, 2014), a desirable business outcome (see Table II); and those interviewed confirmed the use of training within their respective organizations. In fact, Southern Nigeria THL organizations provide employees with the-job (OJT), classroom, specialist in-house training, specialized hospitality school courses, and marketing courses. In addition, supervisory lead OJT introduces employees to the system, and formal training incorporates the practical aspects to whole concept of integration and the interrelated concept of a business model. This combination of employee training and development is consistent with the literature and the HC theory framework (Arionesei *et al.*, 2014; Pearlman and Schaffer, 2013).

The content of THL organizational training programs are important to achieve the intent of employee development (Arionesei *et al.*, 2014). More specifically, the research identified the major areas of training are housekeeping, safety, security, firefighting, and emergency response; and it was noted that training content must be adequate to bring out the best in an employee. The constant change in the THL industry demands that training is regular as an inevitable part of the business that enhances employees’ job satisfaction (Arionesei *et al.*, 2014; Pearlman and Schaffer, 2013). For the training to have effectiveness, organization must conduct yearly training due to a workforce turnover. Consistent with these submissions was THL documents which validated workplace practices of providing annual training on such as workplace hazard management, risk management, food handling and hygiene, waste management, health and safety, customer satisfaction and complaints handling, behavior, stakeholder management, and finance. This strategy supported the assertion of Georgiadis and Pitelis (2012) that specialist experience was a strong positive predictor of company profitability.

Technology

Labor productivity does not depend on the adoption or the intensity of technology (Li, 2014; Sandulli *et al.*, 2014). While observations conducted onsite identified all THL organizations used information technology at the front desk; there were no other HCD-related technologies, such as mobile apps used given cost escalation challenges (see Table IV). In addition, the macroeconomic challenge of power infrastructure (see Table III) exists as a challenge. Furthermore, industry leaders noted managing software as a significant challenge, since acquiring and employing an IT system engineer to manage off the shelf software is not readily sustainable especially when power failures are a regular occurrence.

Moving from a technology based system to a paper based approach created a further potential for fraud. Lastly, HCD-related technology penetration into the Southern Nigeria THL industry is minimal, consistent with Li’s (2014) finding that investment in information communication technology does not translate to significant productivity increase in service sectors.

Institutionalizing ethics and compliance

THL organization needs to establish the right ethical rules to regulate employee behaviors (Lee and Tsang, 2013). THL leaders noted that institutionalizing ethics and compliance was essential to discourage miscreants from committing offenses. To ensure employee adherence to this philosophy, leaders followed the third strike rule: that is, after the third occurrence of the same offense, management exercised its legal right to hire and fire. "We discourage indiscipline but recognize staffs that maintain decorum." Highlighted in the operationalization of the organization's ethics and compliance standard documentation was an observation of the induction conducted for a new intern. The induction reiterated ethical requirements of the organization and the expectations which new staff must follow. In addition to their function as security surveillance tools, THL further strengthens ethics and compliance through security camera system, which monitors staff to ensure unethical behaviors are captured; and staff are aware of on location monitoring. Lee and Tsang (2013) identified that employees in a people-focused industry such as THL industry need a structured guide on conduct, especially to respond to difficult customer. Leaders, interviewed in this study stated that leaders are not always at the service points to effect ethical compliance, a submission that agreed with Lee and Tsang (2013).

Recommendations for further study

The main study findings were five strategies from the recruitment of employees to training and performance management through reward and recognition. Other findings were the challenges the THL industry face in developing HC and the attendant business outcomes related to developing business strategies. Since this study has limitations related to the geographic location, to enhance the contribution of this study to business practice, researchers should conduct studies with a larger sample size, possibly by changing participants' selection criteria and by including organizations from the other four geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Researchers should also include leaders from other THL sub-sectors such as restaurants and tour operators since this would enable researchers to derive additional insight and understanding by investigating how the strategies influence business performance indicators such as customer satisfaction, financial performance, and employee turnover.

Conclusions

The themes from this research signified the strategies THL leaders used to develop its HC. The findings confirmed: recruiting persons with requisite social capital; inducting employees to demonstrate a high ethical standard; training the personnel; providing reward and recognition; and adopting affordable technologies to develop employees were all congruent with global benchmark results (WTTC, 2015a), the extant literature promulgations of HCT (Sandulli *et al.*, 2014), and addressed the research question. The research provided an understanding of the what and how of HCD in the THL industry in Southern Nigeria. In addition, the research findings also highlighted some THL industry challenges with HCD. The insights gained from the findings could provide a guide to all stakeholders in the THL industry on how to develop the industry through its HC.

Government and policymakers need to address the macroeconomic challenges by making and implementing proactive tourism policies that would increase the demand for THL services and provide the necessary infrastructure, especially security and power to reduce the cost of doing the THL business. Approximately 78 percent of tourists would demand other THL services (Anamaria and Maria-Cristina, 2013; Chun-Ming *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, Nigeria policymakers need to make significant changes to aid the high potential THL industry.

Operators in the THL industry could also enhance corporate productivity and contribute more to the national GDP by utilizing the strategy findings, and could collaborate with hospitality educators or the general education system to instill ethics and discipline in future employees. Individuals interested in a THL career could use the finding as a guide to understanding the challenges and opportunities in the industry with respect to their personal development and engaging in a rewarding career.

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