# HRM Practices in Digital Era and its Positive Impact on Environmental Performance within Hotel Industry

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### ABSTRACT

Digital technologies are new trends in recent times that have revolutionarily changed business models, work, conduct business, and corporate strategies. As a result, the human resources (HR) function has evolved to incorporate digital world in its design thinking, strategizing and implementing. The hotel industry is one of the sectors that move at an unbelievably fast-pace in developing countries due to an increase in the tourism industry. Yet, on the contrary, the hotel industry is heavily increasing the burden on the environment. Thus, because of the huge number of environmental issues that hotel industry has faced over time, there is an increasing force to pay a correct reaction to environmental issues and implementing sustainable business practices. These practices incorporate the adoption of digital human resource management (HRM) practices, offering a win–win situation for the hotel and its stakeholders. This paper examining the relationship between digital HRM practices (digital recruitment and selection, digital training and development, digital performance appraisal, and digital compensation) and environmental performance in the hotel industry. Based on our analysis, the study revealed that digital HRM has a remarkable impact on environmental performance within hotel industry.

**Keywords:** *Digitalization, digital HRM, environmental performance, hotel industry*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Although we are in the COVID-19 era where the hotel industry barely survives, it is anticipated that hotels will see a boom once the pandemic is over. Back to history, the world travel and tourism industry has been moving at a fast-paced rate since the year 1950 (Hotel Investment Outlook, 2017). Along with that, within the next ten years, the number of international visitors is expected to increase by 4% yearly, which will lead to a higher demand for hotel rooms (Hotel Investment Outlook, 2017). As the hotel industry is growing rapidly, there are an extreme growing number of environmental concerns that the hotel industry has faced, which causes the pressure on them to respond appropriately to environmental issues (Erdogan & Baris, 2007). Therefore, most hotels are under internal and external pressures to devote focus on environmental sustainability through sustainable hotel facilities that are both environment conscious and safe for travellers (Graci & Kuehnel, 2011).

The most significant HR function is recruitment. However, the hotel industry

always has a hard time retaining employees, and it is said to be among one of the major challenges for them (Bangwal & Tiwari, 2019). Therefore, due to the increase in turnover of employees, there is often recruitment in the industry. To do this, some companies used a paper-based method, which means job advertisements are posted on newspaper advertisements, posters outside office spaces, and distributed through flyers (Sills, 2014). That is, with every recruitment process, a huge number of papers is wasted, causing a negative impact on the environment. Thus, it is important to use the digitalization of HRM in the hotel industry and use methods such as online applications, online interviews, and telephonic interviews to reduce paper waste and fuel consumption associated with interview travel. Thereby, with the use of these practices, the rates of negative environmental impact can be reduced (Bombiak & Marciniuk, 2018).

Moreover, in the United States, one out of every four hoteliers still manage their properties with pen and paper (Short, 2015). There is a massive amount of waste generated due to it. The main contributors to these wastes are paper receipts, registration cards, and invoices, which are all outdated procedures that are currently ready for digitization (Sampson, 2018). In addition, the hotel industry is among the 13.3 million people employed in the industry (Statista, 2021). However, as there are still hotels that still use pen and paper systems, it is applicable to say that a paper payroll system is used to give salary and compensation to the employees. Along with that, those hotels use a paper-based tracking system to record employee attendance, which again highly contributes toward more wastage (Oo, Oo, Chainan, Thongniam, & Chongdarakul, 2018). Therefore, the need for the hotel industry to completely switch from pen and paper systems to digitalization is important, as it is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world.

The use of digital technology in Human Resource Management (HRM) creates a new trend in hotel management systems. Human resource management refers to a strategic effort by the management system to facilitate organization by planning, recruiting, selecting, training and developing the employees to achieve the common objectives of the organization and individual. The human resource (HR) role is vital in determining which conservation strategies should be enforced in all aspects of business and at all levels of an organization (Cohen, Taylor & Muller-Camen, 2012). Digital HRM practices are known to be the best approach for environmental performance programs, as they provide a tremendous help in terms of being friendly to the environment within the hotel industry. Digital HRM practices are innovative and eco-friendly HR initiatives that result in reduced costs, increased efficiencies, and improved employee satisfaction and involvement, which together help companies reduce wastage.

Hence, in this paper, it is essential to identify that digital HRM practices remarkably increase the contribution to the environmental performance in the hotel industry. This paper is an earnest attempt to investigate the relation between digital HRM practices as a major support to the environmental performance in the hotel industry. Thus, the next section highlights the literature review on digitalization, digital HRM practices, environmental performance, and digitalization of HRM and environmental performance. Afterwards, we present our methodology and discussion. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of our findings.

## 2.0    REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the following section, is a structured discussion according to a review of previous materials related to digitization, digital HRM practices, environmental performance, and relationship between HRM digitization and environmental performance.

### 2.1    Digitalization

Nowadays terms such as "digitization," "digitalization," "digital transformation," or "digital disruption" rank in the most top research topic. These topics reflect the growing use of technology and the large changes that are appropriate in many areas of

business and society. The digitalization also can be apply for the domain of human resource management (HRM).

Reviews of the general digitalization research show that diverse explicit definitions of concepts exist and are quite heterogeneous by Kuusisto (2017), Vesti, Rosenstand and Gertsen, (2018) and Vial (2019). Evseeva, Kalchenko, Evseeva, and Plis, (2019) states that "the digitalization of processes is relevant not only at the level of individual enterprises: there is a growing pressure from international and domestic network companies that are able to meet all new and new consumer demands as soon as possible". Digitalization is a broad organizational phenomenon that involves all organizational functions. Thereby, digital HRM can be conceptualized in terms of the overall digitalization of businesses. Moreover, the digitization of the organization and the digitization of HRM are interconnected (Bondarouk, Ruël, & Parry,2017; Amladi, 2017).

## 2.2    Digital HRM Practices

To have a deep insight into what digital HRM is, it is essential to define the meaning of HRM. According to Amladi (2017), the best HRM practices areas are "recruitment and selection, socialization, job design, training and development, participation, career development, performance appraisal, employee reward and job security". In addition, Mondy and Mondy (2012) stated HRM as practices relating to the relationship between the employees and the organization in which they work. Moreover, HRM can be explained as the management of HR in order to enable the organization to grow.

### *Digital Recruitment*

Due to their advantages such as cost, time and efficiency, most companies currently embrace digital recruitment methods instead of traditional methods. The benefits of integrated recruitment systems have been accepted and widely used by enterprises (Sylva & Mol, 2009). Digital recruitment is the use of digital tools which efficiently fill open positions within the company (Lee, 2005). Via various network websites, companies can create unlimited job vacancies for the potential candidates with almost no cost.

Lee (2005) stated the digital recruitment process stages as follows:

- Definition of required positions.
- Announcement of the job on the internet.
- Announcement of the need for an open position to potential candidates in the digital environment.
- Enabling current announcements to be seen by job seekers.
- Job seekers evaluate themselves whether or not the position is suitable for them.
- The applicant's application via system who intends to apply for a job.
- The HRM department's evaluation of the pool in the virtual environment.
- Job interview by human resources authorities.
- Job offers and contracts.

In light of this, companies announce job advertisements through their websites and network platforms (i.e. LinkedIn and Job Street) provide low cost for companies and provide easier access within potential candidates (Körfez, 2008). Unlike the traditional recruitment method, digital recruitment is an effective process where most activities are performed in timely manners (Lee, 2005).

### *Digital Training and Development*

Training and development attempt to improve current or future employee performance by increasing an employee's ability to perform through learning, typically by changing the employee's knowledge, skills, attitude and other characteristics (KSAO). Digital learning, which is a subset of distance education, consists of processes and applications that involve digital based and virtual spaces (Amladi, 2017).

With the support of e-learning information and communication technologies, educational content is realized by transferring

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the contents of the internet to the digital media via multimedia tools such as internet, intranet and extranet as well as audio, videotape, interactive television broadcast and CD-ROM (Schank, 2002). Therefore, it improves the quality and effectiveness of training and by making training suitable for the job requirements by applying and accessing information instantly. That is, unlike traditional training and development, digital training and development activities can be provided at a lower cost (Schank, 2002).

### *Digital Performance Appraisal/Evaluation*

Performance appraisal is an official system for the examining and evaluating of task performance as an individual or as a group (Mondy & Mondy, 2012). In recent years, performance appraisal has become the biggest contributor to organizational effectiveness. That is, due to digital performance evaluation systems, all data on performance objectives, reconciliations, standards, performance problems and evaluation results are kept in digital data centers, and it has provided time to human resources professionals in terms of accessing data and time (Karcıoğlu & Öztürk, 2009).

Digital performance appraisal smooth performance measurements by keeping records of certain data such as time spent on tasks, completed work quantities and error rates. In 360-degree assessment, for instance, evaluations via intranet networks in companies, all assessors are asked to perform an online performance assessment of the person to be assessed by email. Thus, the evaluation data are combined to provide feedback to the evaluated person and enable them to improve their performance (Karcıoğlu & Öztürk, 2009).

### *Digital Compensation*

Digital compensation denotes web-based software tools that enable managers to effectively design, administer, and communicate compensation programs within the organization. Mondy and Mondy (2012) stated that when an organization is using its

financial resources in the best way possible; it is more possible for it to increase its efficiency and develop its performance to a higher limit. In light of this, digital compensation is an approach that incorporates the best and most suitable exploitation of financial resources in an organization as well as its ability to distribute compensations on individuals in an equal and fair manner, in comparison to traditional compensation programs.

### 2.3    Environmental Performance

Since performance is always related to the fulfilment of expectations, environmental performance is defined as the extent to which companies meet the expectations of their stakeholders regarding environmental responsibility (Carroll, 2000). There are numerous companies in the industry that are introducing strategic environmental performance initiatives, such as digitalization of HRM to achieve a competitive advantage. According to Chakader and Gulati (2015), some of the stakeholders claim that such environmentally friendly businesses are too costly. However, they also stated that some stakeholders also argue that customers and the capital markets value such businesses, and it can help to boost business performance.

As identified by Sharma (2021) the hotel industry is becoming too big for the business sector, and as it is one of the leading waste producers, creating a negative environmental performance. Therefore, in the hotel industry, it is important that the technology and machinery is used and transformed in such a way that energy usage can be reduced to a greater extent. This initiative was made because the harmful effects of various chemicals, with industrial wastes being the main culprit, have been evident in the rapid deterioration and depletion of our natural resources.

In a study conducted by Yusoff, Nejati, and Hung Kee, (2020), it was highlighted that there are numbers of businesses in the industry changing to environmentally friendly practices such as digitalization of HRM due to their awareness of environmental issues. Along with that, as stated by Daily, Bishop and

Massoud (2012) and as discussed earlier, as a result of developed countries' rapid depletion of natural resources, there have been an ever-increasing number of environmental laws and market pressures which have raised businesses' awareness and to switch to environmentally friendly practices in HRM, such as going paperless via digital HRM.

According to Yusoff et al. (2020), businesses in the hotel industry's interest in the environmental performance program are rising as they benefit in various ways due to digitalization of HR, such as improved competitiveness, more well-organized practices, saving in operational costs, and improved brand image. Moreover, Kopp and Lange (2019), highlighted on a paper that the digitalization of HR could lead to a 25% increase in resource utilization. It also argues that digitalization HR has the potential to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20%.

As a result of using digitalization of HRM, many businesses in the hotel industry can benefit as it helps to minimize the pollution, digital house gas emissions, toxic waste emissions, and solid waste emissions (Daily et al., 2012). In addition, as highlighted by Yusoff et al. (2020), these benefits will help those businesses to gain competitive advantage over the competitors, while fulfilling the social demand of environmental performance and therefore, the number of businesses implementing environmental performance into their business strategies is increasing every day.

To achieve a good environment performance with it, the organizations need to hire the right people with the right skills to do so (Yusoff et al., 2020). Therefore, businesses should give high importance to this while making it as part of their strategic objectives, so they can influence the people who are involved in it and make necessary changes to achieve those objectives.

## 3.0    METHODOLOGY

To find relevant literature on digitalization in HRM and environmental performance within the hotel industry, systematic bibliographic research was conducted. To carry out this selection, the keywords "digitization, digital HRM, environmental performance, and hotel industry" have been included in the Google Scholar search database, limited to the period of 2000-2020. We analysed literature, draw the findings and further research directions.

This study employs a methodology to review the articles cited in the databases such as Sage, Science Direct, Springer link, Taylor and Francis Online and Emerald with the current topic of PWDs, hotel industry, HRM practices, digitalization and environmental performance. These studies were categorised into research areas, some of the findings of which are presented in the introduction and literature review section as discussed above and further highlighted in the following section. Few examples of selected papers are stated in table 1 in the Appendix section.

## 4.0    DISCUSSION

### 4.1    Digitalization of HRM and Environmental Performance

The main goal of this paper was to study the relationship between digital HRM and environmental performance in the hotel industry. Based comprehensive analysis in literature review we have suggested that the digitalization is ought to be the implementation of digital tools aimed at innovating the business model and its mission and vision. Furthermore, it is a vital for organization to achieve sustainability environmental performance by applying digital application in organization.

Currently, hotels are switching from the traditional HRM functions such as recruitment, selection, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation to new technological tools with innovative HR practices. Therefore, in the last decade, the use of technology in the hotel sector has impressively changed the face of the HRM functions.

According to Mampra (2013), Digital HRM is the use of HRM policies to encourage the sustainable use of resources within business enterprises and promote the cause of environmentalism which further boosts up

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employee morale and satisfaction. Therefore, the use of applications and other digital platforms in the HRM process is also known as a part of Digital HRM (Halid, Yusoff, & Somu, 2020). Moreover, it is vital to use digitalization of HRM to manage environmental performance in the business, specifically in the hotel industry.

In addition, it was identified by Ahmed (2015) that most of the companies in the hotel industry have already implemented digitalization of HRM, where employees are emailed their pay receipts, and notes are made on tablet devices. This has helped and is important to minimize the use of paper wastage which contributes to sustainable environmental performance. Moreover, it was also highlighted that with the digitalization of HRM, businesses can go paperless when it comes to filing employee or guest information, guest sending and receiving payment. This way it can help directly to conserve natural resources, prevent pollution, by reducing wastage of paper.

According to a study by Young, Davis, McNeill, Malhotra, Russell, Unsworth, & Clegg, (2015), companies are increasingly enlisting employee participation in behaviour change to address environmental concerns such as energy and water conservation, digital house gas reduction, reducing the paper wastage as a result of using the change in HRM practices from traditional way to the digitalization of it. Furthermore, the study by Chan, Hon, Chan, & Okumus, (2014) indicates that environmental performance programs by employees in the hotel industry are narrowly associated with digital HRM factors such as digitalization of HRM. These factors involve selecting candidates with sufficient environmental knowledge and behaviour and providing constant training to employees such as usage of digital HRM as potential keys to improving industry's environmental performance.

According to the findings of Salehudin, Prasad and Osmond (2013) promoting environmental performance programs in Malaysia's hotel industry could be difficult due to the employees. This means that it might be even difficult to establish complete digitalization of HRM in the industry. However,

it is important to achieve a positive attitude of employees towards it (Chan et al., 2014), as employee involvement plays a vital role in environmental performance and succeeding it, Although there are not that many studies carried out to understand the relationship between the readiness of employees on digitalization and environmental performances, it was mentioned by Yusoff et al. (2020), in a study that environmental management helps to enhance the employee satisfaction and moral values.

Therefore, in order to improve the environmental performance in the hotel industry, it is important to implement and involve digitalization in the HRM practices. Moreover, if it is implemented in the most efficient way it will lead to an improvement in the firm's environmental performance, as mentioned in a study by Yusoff et al. (2020). This is because the use of effective HRM practices at all levels of the operational processes greatly inspire employee's motivation.

With regard to HRM practice, recruitment and selection are considered the first process. Followed by selection that ends with placement of candidates. Currently, the revolution of global hiring HR has become easy and cost effective because of social website networks. As for training and development, it is one of the crucial areas of HR in the hotel industry. With the digitalization in training and development, the HR department has moved forward with new approaches to provide training employee. New technologies have been implemented such as online courses, computerized learning methods, showing job related videos, and reading through soft copies has made a revolution in teaching techniques.

This study also highlights digitalization in performance appraisal and compensation which are an essential process for any employer working in the hotel industry. Due to digitalization, the employee's information is now saved in the database whereby the immediate access of the data required of the employees has been made more flexible. This process plays an important role in terms of environmental performance since the use of manual personal files is being reduced and the

information required by any authorized person can be sent to any part of the world through digitalization.

These digital process in HRM practices has tremendously helped the hotel industry with an easy and quick process with the lower cost. On top of that, the huge reduction in paper usage and electricity usage has positively affected the environmental performance.

## 5.0    CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relation between digital HRM and environmental performance in the hotel industry. To achieve this goal, we have analysed the existing literature on the subject along with the discussion part in order to identify digital HRM practices and its positive relation to environmental performance.

Based on the discussion, conclusively, digital HRM practices (digital recruitment and selection; digital training and development; digital performance appraisal; and digital compensation) heavily contribute to the environmental performance in the hotel industry. By this study, we sum up that with the help of digital HR practices and technology in the hotel industry can improve the overall organizational performance along with the environmental performance.

However, as it is anticipated that hotels will see a boom once the COVID-19 is over, hoteliers and HR personnel may refer to this paper in order to futuristically implement the digital HRM practices for the sake of environmental performance.

### *Managerial Implications*

This paper provides valuable suggestions to practitioners in the hotel industry across the world. That is, HR personnel in the hotel industry could make full use of this study to manage the HR by providing essentially strategic recommendations with regards to environmental performance, digital practices and processes towards HRM in the hotel industry. On top of that, although we are in the COVID-19 era where the hotel industry barely

survives, it is important that hoteliers implement digital HRM as the concept of Work from Home (WFH) has become quite popular.

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**APPENDIX**

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TABLE I
Summary of few selected papers

| No. | Authors | Year | Title | Source | Summary of Study/Finding |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Yusoff, Y. M., Nejati, M., & Hung Kee, D. M. | 2020 | Linking Green Human Resource Management Practices to Environmental Performance in Hotel Industry | Global Business Review, 21(3), 663-680. | -Green HRM practices lead to environmental performance in the hotel industry |
| 2 | Strohmeier, S. | 2020 | Digital Human Resource Management: A Conceptual Clarification. | German Journal of Human Resource Management, 34(3), 345-365 | -Digital HRM constitutes evolutionary step in conceptualizing technology-based HRM. -As the digitalization of HRM accelerates, the need for corresponding research efforts increases. |
| 3 | Halid, H., Yusoff, Y. M., & Somu, H. | 2020 | The Relationship Between Digital Human Resource Management and Organizational Performance | First ASEAN Business, Environment, and Technology Symposium (ABEATS 2019) (pp. 96-99). Atlantis Press | -Digital HRM practices boost organizational performance and help in achieving the overall vision and mission to the company. |
| 4 | Bondarouk, T., M. Ruël, H. J., & Parry, E. | 2017 | Electronic HRM in the Smart Era | Emerald Publishing Limited | -Presenting the new term of "digitalization" and its relation to digital HRM. -Explaining E-HRM Practices |
| 5 | Almoudi, R. H. | 2009 | Resource Use, Waste, and Total Productivity Management in Saudi Arabia Hotel Industry | International Journal of Basic & Applied Sciences–IJBAS, 9 (10), 94210-8383. | -Presenting ways of waste reduction within the hotel industry |