

**AN EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES AND SERVICE QUALITY:  
AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION IN THE CANADIAN HOTEL  
INDUSTRY**

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## **Abstract**

Human resource management (HRM) practices have been recognised as a key function in enhancing organisational productivity and sustaining competitive advantage for organisations. It has been noted that most studies that are based on the relationship between HRM practices and performance indicators (e.g., service quality) in hotels hide an important element that tells hoteliers which factors to concentrate on in cases of poor performance. There is a lack of qualitative studies to highlight the effect of HRM practices on service quality in Canadian hotels. Therefore, this research aimed to examine the influence of HRM practices on service quality in the Canadian hotel industry. This study aims first to propose a working definition of service quality in hotels and then to develop a conceptual model to help hotel managers improve service quality in the light of HRM practices. This study seeks to investigate how employee recruitment and selection, training, rewards and incentives, and internal career opportunities help to improve the quality of service in the hotel sector. An exhaustive review was conducted to establish existing facts about the concept of service quality and its significance for the hospitality sector. Likewise, sources that addressed issues in the HRM discipline were analysed to assess the role of HRM practices in ensuring service quality. The qualitative research method was employed in the study. Three sets of semi-structured interviews were designed to obtain a perspective on the relationship between HRM practices and service quality from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy within hotel organisations in Canada. They were semi-structured and face-to-face. The sample was made up of 6 HR managers, 6 supervisors and 22 non-management employees. The findings of the research indicated the presence of a strong association between recruitment and selection and service quality. The themes obtained from interviewees suggested that an established process of hiring of induction for new employees is an effective first step in ensuring that any new person joining the organisation is aware of service quality standards and expectations. The findings further indicated that recruitment and selection help in hiring and selecting skilled people to deliver service quality. This suggested that recruitment and selection play a key role in impacting the service quality. It was found that training and development, incentives and rewards, and internal career opportunities have an effect on service quality. Moreover, the relationship between all the HR practices as a bundle and service quality was reported as having an effect to improve service quality. A key contribution of this study that it offers a workable definition of service quality and then a robust model for the relationship

between HRM practices and service quality that contributes to enhance knowledge of the causal relationship between them. In addition, this study contributes by identifying which HRM practices a hotel could adopt to gain a service quality advantage in the marketplace. Moreover, the proposed conceptual framework contributes by improving our understanding of the causal relationships between HRM practices and service quality. Managerial implications, research limitations and research avenues were then captured.

**Keywords:** HRM, Service Quality, Hotels, Canada, Recruitment and Selection, Training, Rewards and Incentives, Internal Career Opportunity.

## **Declaration**

I declare that this work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted for any other degree. I further declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent work and investigation, except where otherwise stated, (a bibliography is appended).

Finally, I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan and for the title and abstract to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed: Osama Khassawneh

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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Overview**

This chapter introduces the background, context and need for the research. The novelty of the research and the contribution to knowledge are presented and the thesis structure is outlined.

### **1.2 Background**

The hotel industry is experiencing tremendous transformation in terms of the quality of its services and its response rate to the customer's needs (Cho et al., 2006). These improvements in the quality of services rendered in organisations generally depend heavily on the role of the human resources (HR) department, which controls the employee relations system (Batt, 2002). HR managers in the hotel industry are now placing a lot of emphasis on their HR policies and practices to ensure service quality, and the decision to apply such a focus follows the core realisation that employees are vital to achieving a high level of service quality (Ahmad et al., 2010).

Admittedly, a number of studies have carried out related research in recent times, but only a few of them have actually investigated the relationship between HRM and the performance of their employees in delivering service quality as seen from the perspective of both the employees and HR managers. For example, Nadda et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between HR practices and employees' performance in British hotels. Also, Al-Refaie (2015) examined the effects of human resource management on hotel performance using structural equation modelling and determined that there is a positive relationship between the variables. In addition, Hoque (2013) implemented a study on HRM and performance in the UK hotel industry and found that there is a strong relationship between HRM practices and service quality delivered by hotels. Therefore, the study serves as an extremely necessary line of enquiry given the importance of an effective HR department in an organisation.

Furthermore, Ray et al. (2005) and Yang and Cherry (2008) said that it is expected that similarities might exist between the findings of their study and prior ones because of the institutional isomorphism that exists in a developed institutional framework like the hospitality industry in Canada. Institutional theory is relatively new and leads to an analysis of the

determinants of HR practices. This institutional environment is the source of regulation, benefits and rewards, and organisational behaviour. In addition, institutionalism is impacted by some factors such as social, political, technological and economic ones. Therefore, the rapid change in these environments influences the approach of strategic HR (Peng and Khoury, 2008). This has necessitated a bundling approach to investigating the relationship between HR practices and service quality. Therefore, this study's focus will also be on a specific bundle of HR practices. It takes a different approach from prior works – works that had focused on individual HR practices without paying particular attention to how the hospitality industry is affected (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001). The study will mainly investigate four major HR practices: selection and recruitment, training and development, rewards and incentives, and internal career opportunities. These practices were strongly recommended for investigation by many scholars such as Buckley and Ferris (1996), Cho et al. (2006), Maxwell and Watson (2006), Chand and Katou (2007), and Aspridis and Kyriakou (2012). In relation to selection and recruitment, the matching of employees and their capabilities and career needs with career paths and jobs will be examined. Besides this, selection criteria and the job interview process will be considered. In relation to training and development, the identification, assessment and development of important competences for present and future jobs will be examined. Also, rewards and incentives and their components will be explored. Finally, in relation to internal career opportunities, some factors such as job advancement and career ladders and pathways will be examined.

In the hospitality industry, the significance of HRM and performance, both of which impact on quality of services, has been established. According to Yang and Lin (2009), HRM practices have a vital role in ensuring high levels of service quality. Arguably, there is strong evidence that HRM practices make enormous contributions to the financial performance of a firm. Therefore, as Wilkins et al. (2007) and Ladhari (2009a) averred, the service quality of the organisation is a reflection of the performance of the HRM. On the other hand, Baum (2019a) argued that research into the workforce in the hospitality industry is neglected. He also stated that governments are hesitant about hospitality as an industry, and investment and consideration are mainly given to science, technology, engineering and medicine (STEM).

An employee's quality and competence, together with proper management processes for human resources, are necessary for establishing service quality in hotels. The ability of any given hotel enterprise to focus on service quality and customer needs will earn it a competitive advantage in

the hotel industry. This study explores the significance of human resources in the hotel industry and the impact that HR practices could have on service quality parameters. One of the most critical factors for the success of hotel services is the ability of the organisation to uphold its market position despite the competition. Employees' service performance significantly shapes customers' perceptions of the quality of the services (Batt, 2002). In this study, the relevance of HR practices in the hotel industry will be brought to light, keeping in mind customers' demands for high quality of services and products. Nevertheless, this study seeks to show the significance of understanding the relationship between HR practices and the quality of services in the ever changing hotel industry (Maxwell and Watson, 2006; Salazar et al., 2010).

There is no doubt that the more investment there is in HRM practices, the greater the level of operational success that is achieved and sustained in the market (Batt, 2002). Batt (2002) also acknowledged that the most agreed-on future key differentiator between a firm's success and failure could be the effectiveness of HRM practices.

HRM practices have been recognised by many scholars as a crucial function for enhancing organisational performance and sustaining competitive advantage for organisations (Salazar et al., 2010). However, the best HRM practices essentially began in the United States of America (USA), with other Western countries such as Britain and Canada, as well as some other developed countries, following the USA's lead (Holland, 2014).

The findings from the research will have implications for both theory and practice, which will have profound value for HR managers, hoteliers, the Canadian Human Resource Authority (CHRA), HR consulting bodies, trade unions, the Canadian Hotel Managers Association and any other hospitality professionals. This is because there has been limited prior study of the relationship between HR practices and service quality in Canadian hotels. This study considers those employees who interact directly with guests in the Canadian hotel sector. The implications will be discussed in depth in the final chapter.

### 1.3 Research Question, Aim and Objectives

In view of the need for the research and the gaps in knowledge that have been identified, a primary research question was established:

*What is the impact of HR practices on service quality in Canadian hotels?*

This study presents an overall approach for exploring the relationship between HRM practices and service quality using empirical data from five-star Canadian hotels. In order to achieve this aim, five objectives have been highlighted:

**Objective 1:** Conduct a critical review of relevant literature related to service quality, its dimensions and evaluations and the HRM practices that improve service quality in the hotel context.

**Objective 2:** Evaluate the degree of hotel staff's awareness of different service quality dimensions.

**Objective 3:** Identify the HRM practices that improve or impede service quality from the hotel staff's perspective.

**Objective 4:** Identify the relationship between HRM practices and service quality in hotels.

**Objective 5:** Develop a conceptual model that describes the relationship between HRM practices and service quality for hoteliers.

The above objectives were achieved through different methods. First, the literature (secondary data) was critically reviewed in order to achieve the first objective (see chapter two). In addition, a qualitative study was conducted by interviewing hotels' HR managers, hotel supervisors and non-managers to achieve the second, third and fourth objectives (see chapter four). The fifth objective was then achieved by interpreting all the interview transcripts detailed in chapter four.

## **1.4 Research Problems**

The five-star hotel organisations in Canada are assumed to be of the highest quality. However, competition is very high and it is crucial to focus on service quality as a competitive advantage (Murray et al., 2017).

The majority of research endeavours investigating the relationship between service quality and HRM have been conducted in the manufacturing industry and have shown that this relationship varies depending on geographical location, organisational culture and business industry (Katou and Budhwar, 2010; Nadeem, 2010; Gunday et al., 2011; Seong, 2011; Springer, 2011). The need to understand this relationship between service quality and HRM practices within a hospitality context – specifically within the hotel industry in Canada – led to this study's research questions.

Several researchers have attempted to identify the relationships between HRM practices, HRM outcomes and service quality; however, a gap exists with respect to identifying which practices shape the relationship between service quality and HRM (Katou and Budhwar, 2007; Harney and Jordan, 2008; Katou, 2011; Oladipo and Abdulkadir, 2012).

Globally, the management practices of HR in workplaces in the hotel industry have been reported to have had a negative impact on the performance of five-star hotels with regard to lowered the service quality and competitiveness of five-star hotels (Duncan et al., 2013; Birdir and Canakci, 2014; Zopiatis et al., 2014a; Zopiatis et al., 2014b). The Canadian hotel industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the Canadian economy, and thus HRM practices in the workplace are significant in terms of sustaining the industry's success (Zopiatis et al., 2014a). Taking into account the status of HRM practices in the workplace, it was found that there is a need for more effective compensation for employees (Baum, 2016; Salvioni, 2016; Gaur and Herjanto, 2017) such as pay, training, employment security, status recognition, allowances and many other practices that determine the effectiveness of an employment relationship in work environments. According to Milkovich and Newman (2008), compensation refers to financial rewards, tangible services and benefits workers receive as an outcome of their employment relationship. For this reason, the practice of reward and incentives was chosen as one of the HR practices in this study, in order to explore its relation to the level of service quality provided in Canadian five-star hotels.

Although there are many studies and research endeavours in the field of HRM (Kaufman, 2012), they do not seem to have adequately addressed the strategic importance of HRM. Further, Cohen (2015, p.213) stated that, regarding HRM practices, “it is clear that there is disagreement over the usefulness and effectiveness of a large portion of research over the past 30 years”. This study intends to contribute to these previous research endeavours by identifying the reasons for that. By exploring the impact of HR practices on service quality in the hotels, this study will add more knowledge and highlight the best HR practices amongst the main practices (recruitment and selection, training, incentives, and internal career opportunity) that help to improve the service quality. The findings from this study will contribute to understanding the most effective HR practices that are needed in order to improve the level of service quality in Canadian hotels.

On the other hand, the majority of service quality research can be considered customer-centred (Parasuraman et al., 2005; Van Birgelen et al., 2006). These studies mainly focus on investigating the customers’ perceptions of the quality of various services. However, this study will take a different approach by considering the employee’s point of view of the relationship between HR and service quality. Additionally, the study will consider three levels of employees (low-level, supervisors, and HR managers) to ensure in-depth and more accurate data is gained. According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived quality is different from objective or actual quality: a higher-level abstraction rather than a specific attribute of a product, a global assessment that in some cases resembles attitude, and a judgement usually made within a consumer’s evoked set. However, the academic debate around how to conceptualise service quality has not yet been fully resolved. Some researchers evaluate service quality based on the disconfirmation paradigm – that is, as a gap between the expected (desired) service and perceived service (Dabholkar et al., 1996; Carr, 2007). Parasuraman et al. (1985) were the first researchers to introduce a gap-based service quality model. They identified four gaps in the customer–company relationship affecting service quality perceptions (the consumer expectations vs management perceptions gap, the management perceptions vs service quality specification gap, the service quality specification vs service delivery gap, and the service delivery vs external communications gap). Other researchers have used a performance-only approach to evaluate service quality (Boulding et al., 1993; Teas, 1993). The concepts of the gap and performance-only approaches are, in fact, not as contradictory as alleged. Performance-only approaches postulate an “ideal standard” of services. It can be argued that if customers rate a service below this ideal standard and if it can be at all



defined, from that point the customers' service quality perceptions are negative. Gap analysis, however, provides a more pragmatic and operational approach, since customers' service perceptions can be considered to be negative as soon as their expectations are assumed to be higher than their perceptions (Parasuraman et al., 1994; Cetin and Walls, 2016). Therefore, the academic debate around how to conceptualise service quality has not yet been fully resolved. This study will obtain greater insight into the concept of service quality from the Canadian hotel industry. The study will focus on understanding the most effective HR practices at three different managerial levels: HR managers, supervisors, and low-level workers.

A comprehensive overview of the service quality literature reveals that empirical research in this area has been widely developed based on a positivist ontological paradigm. Extant literature has generally focused on an objective measurement of service quality dimensions. The outcome has been static service quality models, which have been generalised to several service settings (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2003). However, important service quality researchers have acknowledged the need for concepts about service quality that embrace subjective first-person customer perspectives (Grönroos, 1984). Gummesson (2001) suggested a shift to scientific pluralism as the existing methodologies were not able to solve the exigent research problems in the field. Therefore, this study adopted the qualitative approach to conduct further in-depth investigation into the phenomena.

The studies available in the past literature have largely relied on the quantitative questionnaire methodology to determine the relationship between human resource practices, service quality and performance (Huselid, 1995; Hoque, 1999; Chand, 2010; Brien et al., 2018; Hewagama et al., 2019). While the vast number of quantitative questionnaire-survey-based studies have provided empirical evidence regarding the service quality and HRM relationship, these studies have failed to conduct deeper analysis of the research phenomena, particularly regarding the question of how HRM practices and interrelated employee relations practices can directly impact on the service quality behaviour of employees working in the hotel industry (Alleyne et al., 2005). As noted by Saunders et al. (2015, p.53), "the data from questionnaire surveys may not be as wide-ranging as those collected through interview and other qualitative research strategies".

Given the limitations of quantitative studies in this context, the use of qualitative studies will enable a better exploration and understanding of the question of how HRM practices can

contribute to the service quality of the hotel industry. Ingram (1997), Alleyne, Doherty and Howard (2005), Yang and Cherry (2008), and Lu et al. (2015) also pointed out that more and more researchers are realising today the effectiveness of qualitative methodologies as valid techniques for a deep examination of hotel and hospitality activities.

Furthermore, quantitative approaches would not align with the research questions nor allow for delving into the perspectives of interviewees with respect to their thoughts regarding what association actually exists between HR practices and service quality in an ethnographical manner (Babbie, 2009). Furthermore, while it has been acknowledged that the relationship of service quality and HR practices can be tested using quantitative research (Chand, 2010), there is no known identification of this relationship as being linear, which hinders the development of a quantitative instrument to examine this relationship in a detailed manner. Therefore, a qualitative approach is needed to begin the exploration and possible identification of the relationship between service quality and HR practices prior to evaluating them quantitatively.

However, some studies in the available literature have used the qualitative methodology by means of the case study approach and interview data collection technique to examine the relationship between HRM practices and service quality in general and for the hotel industry in particular. For example, Alleyne et al. (2005) conducted qualitative research to measure the impact of HRM practices on the performance of hotels in Barbados. They recommended the use of qualitative research for measuring the impact of HRM practices in order to obtain deeper insights. They suggested that qualitative research could be used to examine the impact of internal and external fit as well as the impact of the universal relevance of HRM in the performance of the hotel industry in Barbados. Lu et al. (2015) also conducted qualitative research in the hotel industry to measure the service quality perceptions of managers and customers of luxury hotels. They interviewed hotel managers and customers in five-star hotels in Taiwan so as to obtain an understanding of their perceptions of service quality, luxury and satisfaction. Yang and Cherry (2008) also used the qualitative research method to examine the challenges faced by the Taiwan hotel industry regarding service quality and HR practices such as recruitment and selection, staff training and development, and employee satisfaction. They explored whether challenges related to HRM and service quality are perceived as important by Taiwanese hoteliers, as identified in the previous literature. The current study drew from the same studies its inspiration to conduct

qualitative interview research to examine the relationship between HR practices and service quality in a different context.

The intended quality of the service provided is a very important issue for five-star hotels. To that end, only satisfied employees can provide high-quality service and thus ensure organisational success (Cheruiyot and Maru, 2012). Furthermore, Workfolk (1999) suggested that the adoption of appropriate human resource management practices might assist positively in terms of service quality as well as better organisational performance. The provision of quality service is part of an employee's function (Shammon, 2014). Therefore, the hotel industry in Canada must find a way to establish satisfactory employment relationships in workplaces by enhancing the quality of HRM practices. The extent to which employment practices in an organisation and its host country are acceptable can be determined by the HRM practices used by the five-star hotels involved as a means of meeting employees' needs and expectations (Marescaux et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2015). Further, the extent to which the key HRM practices meet employees' needs and expectations determines the quality of the service delivery (Yarimoglu, 2014).

Although there are many studies that investigate the effectiveness of certain key HRM practices concerning an organisation's success in achieving high service quality, few of them have focused on employees' opinions (Rhee et al., 2014). Thus, this study is considered to be one of the few studies that first and foremost consider the perceptions of hotel staff as a means of getting a closer look at the roots of the problem, and then getting a fuller picture.

This study first proposes a definition of service quality in hotels and then develops a conceptual model using the qualitative approach to help hotel managers to improve service quality in the light of HRM practices.

## **1.5 Rationale for the Research**

The hospitality industry is facing many changes across the globe at a rate much faster than it ever has before. On the other hand, the expectations of guests, employees, stakeholders and organisations associated with the hospitality industry are increasing every day. In order to meet these expectations, the hospitality industry is striving to keep up with new management styles, and innovations in technology and operational processes (Jayawardena, 2013). However, the

Canadian hotel industry has not been able to get away from the reality of the speed at which things are changing and evolving. In other words, it is struggling to keep up with these changes to better meet expectations and demands from various stakeholders (Murray et al., 2017). It is apparent that there is constant change in the hotel industry in Canada, which is redesigning and redefining the hotel sector (Jayawardena et al., 2013; Liu 2016). There are many challenges faced by the Canadian hotel industry. One such challenge is related to the human resources supply, as discussed at the Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Trends (WHATT) roundtable in 2012 (Jayawardena et al., 2017).

Many hotel companies face challenges related to recruitment and retention of high-quality employees in junior and entry-level or lower-level management positions during the seasonality (Jayawardena, 2013). According to Lu et al. (2015), the perspective of quality differs from one hotel facility to another. Obviously, luxury five-star hotels attach more importance to service quality than do their counterparts in the lower category (Rauc et al., 2015). According to Molina-Azorín et al. (2015), five-star hotels operate in a more competitive environment and, given this, need to keep revising their strategies in a bid to stay relevant and retain their customer base. For this reason, Canadian five-star hotels were selected as the sample for this study. In the five-star hotels, the possibility of collecting more data is higher due to having structured departments and specialised HR managers who can help the researcher to achieve the aim of this study.

Ferrary (2015) supported the supposition of caring about service quality in the luxury hotels, further suggesting that service quality is crucial for the proper management of luxury hotels, considering the perceptions that the average guest has of them. Most hotels managers in this category have mastered the art of service quality and have consequently developed a culture of providing nothing short of quality service to their esteemed guests (Ramanathan et al., 2016). Hotels in the top category face competition not only from rivals within the same country but also from hotels in other nations who compete equally for international travellers (Pereira-Moliner et al., 2016). Thus, there is a constant need to maintain a certain level of quality of the services they provide by investigating the antecedents of service quality and its main determinants.

Demand for labour in the accommodation sector in Canada could support 297,129 full-time jobs by 2025, and this industry includes hotels and other lodging operations in Canada. The accommodation sector represents an important component of Canadian travel and tourism,

generating \$17 billion in revenue and \$8.3 billion in salaries and wages, which means that hotels and lodgings contribute an estimated \$7.5 billion in revenue for all three levels of government (Hotel Association of Canada, 2015). Decision-makers in this industry are concerned with federal budget cuts in tourism destination marketing. The USA recently launched Brand USA with a budget of \$100m; Tourism Australia has a budget of \$126m; and Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East all boast significant marketing tourism budgets, whereas Canada's tourism marketing budget has seen a reduction from \$101 million in 2010/2011 to \$58 million in 2013/2014. This reduction has translated into a negative impact on international arrivals to Canada and demand for accommodation (Tourism Industry Association of Canada, 2014). The hotel sector has its own challenges in relation to labour shortages as well as understanding and meeting the needs of a diverse market segment in non-traditional ways (Jayawardena et al., 2017). This might push the HR department in the Canadian hotels to work harder in order to avoid the decline of service quality.

In addition, Teague and Roche (2012) stated that, given the size of the Canadian hotel industry, its growth, and the high levels of competition and rapid changes, managing human resources is important for all managers. However, HRM has been devolved unevenly across organisations in terms of industry type, management level, HRM activities, and level of support from HRM practitioners (Blayney et al., 2018). This motivated the researcher to investigate further the relationship between HR practices and service quality in Canadian five-star hotels.

## **1.6 Thesis Outline**

Figure 1 presents the structure of the thesis.

Chapter one indicates the significance of the research in the HRM practices and service quality context. Thereafter, the chapter sets out the aim and objectives of the study. The potential contribution of the study is also noted and, finally, the structure of the thesis is outlined.

Chapter two contains an extensive literature review of academic sources that were consulted and that related to service quality and HRM practices. The literature review considered a number of related themes as follows: first, presenting an overview of human resource management (HRM); second, discussing HRM practices in the hotel context, followed by the HRM practices

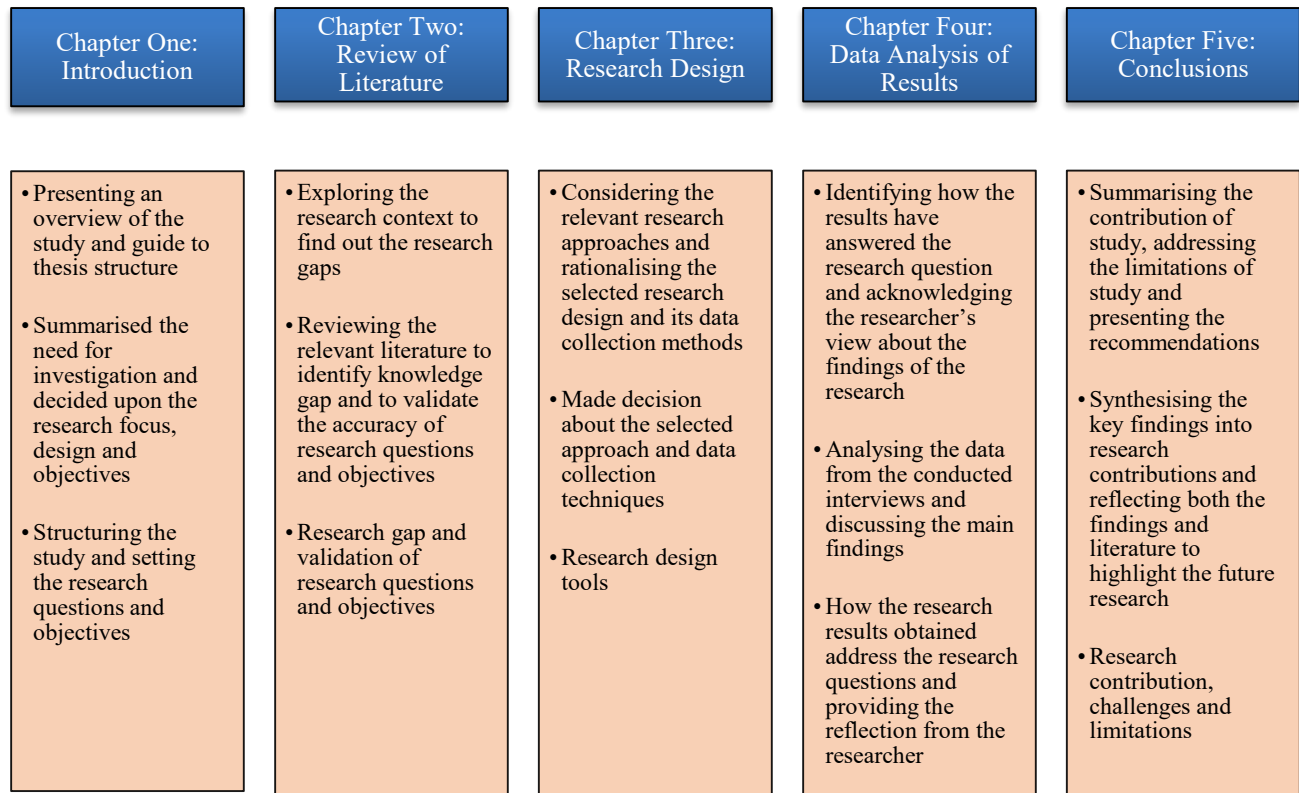
concerned in this study; third, reviewing the service quality concept in the hotel context; fourth, discussing the measurement and management of service quality in the hotel industry; fifth, reviewing the previous literature on the relationship between HRM practices and service quality; and finally, developing a conceptual framework to show the relationship between HRM practices and service quality in hotels.

Chapter three highlights the research methodology and discusses the research approach used to achieve the research objectives by presenting both the philosophical approach adopted and the methods employed. This research is predominantly qualitative in nature and uses the interview tool to analyse the relationship between HRM practices and service quality in the Canadian hotel sector.

Chapter four entails the data analysis and discussion of results obtained from the three different levels of employees (six HR managers, six supervisors and 22 non-managers) within the hotels.

Chapter five reviews and summarises the results of the data analysis in chapter four. It reflects the research question and the way it was answered in this study. It summarises the findings according to the research objectives. It highlights the theoretical implications of the results, as well as emphasising the main contribution to methodology; this is followed by reflection on the practical implications that can be used and adopted by practitioners in the hotel industry. This chapter identified some limitations of the study and proposed some areas and directions for future research.

Figure 1: Thesis Structure



## **2 Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter grounds the research in the current and relevant literature. Gaps in existing knowledge are identified and addressed as they form a significant basis for this investigation. The literature has been concerned with a number of related themes: first, presenting an overview of human resource management (HRM); second, discussing HRM practices in the hotel context, followed by the HRM practices relevant to this study; third, reviewing the service quality concept in the hotel context; fourth, discussing the measurement and management of service quality in the hotel industry; fifth, reviewing the previous literature on the relationship between HRM practices and service quality; and finally, developing a conceptual framework to show the relationship between HRM practices and service quality in hotels.

### **2.2 Overview of Human Resource Management (HRM)**

Human resource management (HRM) refers to the practice of supervising or overseeing matters relating to sourcing, recruiting and employment services in an organisation. Bamberger et al. (2014) reported that human resource management focuses primarily on projects aimed at getting the best out of an organisation's workforce. According to Valmohammadi and Roshanzamir (2015), scholars have increasingly set themselves the task of investigating ways in which human resources contribute to the smooth running of organisational activities. Unfortunately, just a few professionals have committed their research time to establishing how specific human resources practices address particular employee issues in a way that ultimately improves their output.

The literature on HRM has been fairly well-defined at all times (e.g., Riley, 1996; Singh, 2004; Alleyne et al., 2005; Jooss and Burbach, 2017) as the formal structure within an organisation responsible for all the decisions, strategies, factors, principles, operations, practices, functions, activities and methods that are related to the management of staff.

Ramirez (2009) concluded that HRM concepts reflect different decisions affecting an organisation's staff regardless of its size or existence. Simply put, HRM refers to the management of people at work (Bratton and Gold, 2017).



Prior research (e.g., Riley, 1996; Mondy et al., 2005; Ahmad et al., 2010; Rahman et al., 2013) mainly classified HRM into five functional areas: first, staffing (which involves job analysis, HR planning, recruitment and selection); second, HR development (which includes training and development, career planning and development, organisational development and performance appraisal); third, benefits and compensation (which includes pay, benefits and non-financial rewards); fourth, safety and health; and fifth, employee and labour relations. These HRM practices are highly interrelated and they are practised through the organisation at all levels (Stredwick, 2005).

HRM practices were found to have both an economically and statistically significant impact on performance. Huselid (1995) classified HRM practices as control activities, which aim to increase efficiency and reduce direct labour costs, and which rely on strict work rules and procedures and base rewards on output.

Reiche et al. (2014) asserted that HRM is the key that managers should use to unlock their organisation's potential. They further reported that the solution to organisational challenges is always within the owner's reach – the human resources department. As such, managers should never view the practice of investing in human capital as a waste of money. Benn et al. (2014) considered human resources management to be a facet of the overall strategy of an organisation, rather than an independent entity. This way, the system can tailor a management strategy that addresses specific business-related problems.

Organisations looking to meet their set goals within a given business environment must reorganise and repackage their human resource strategies to suit their needs (Nankervis et al., 2013). Often, the primary goal is to gain a viable competitive advantage against one's rivals within an industry. Being a natural feature of commerce, competition either builds or destroys an organisation (Minbaeva, 2013). Given this, it falls to the individual organisation's perception and initiative to overcome the challenge while at the same time capitalising on the opportunities that come with the competition. Many companies achieve competitive advantage over their rivals as long as HRM practices are in full operation (Watson, 2013). Interestingly, most of the literature advocates HRM practices that prioritise employee engagement in the decision-making processes (Bourne et al., 2013).

The human resources departments of businesses in the service sector should customise their approaches to cater specifically to the needs of the industry (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2013). Stiff competition in the industry does not make the situation any better for them, either. For this reason, practices such as teamwork, knowledge sharing, and training and development (talent management) are a fundamental requirement within these organisations (Pfeffer, 2014). Given this, HR managers must strive to implement practices that bring value to the organisation by instilling positive behaviour among the workforce.

Organisational culture is one of the primary factors to consider during the recruitment and outsourcing processes of the workforce (Harper, 2015). HR departments must take care to recruit only employees whose description and qualities fit comfortably into the organisation's culture (Wagner III and Hollenbeck, 2014). For instance, the hotel industry operates differently from other industries. Hoteliers are bound to exhibit conflicting ideologies, and, given this, HR departments should take keen notice of features in an employee's character. Where this step does not suffice, HR departments should be advised to subject its workforce to mandatory orientation or training in a bid to develop or instil the company's ideologies and culture (Adjibolosoo, 2017).

According to Barratt-Pugh and Bahn (2015), the easiest way for an organisation to beat off stiff competition is by employing the appropriate HRM practices. Over time, the discipline of human resource management has undergone a significant transformation, with each organisation opting to design it in the context of the immediate business environment and that of the general economy (Fleisher and Bensoussan, 2015). This way, the practices developed by every service business play a significant role in determining its future within the sector. Consequently, it is essential that hotels should always strive to employ effective human relations in their operations right from the outset (Hoque, 2013). For one thing, HR departments must conduct employee selection and recruitment in a manner that adheres to the company's culture and needs (Vance and Paik, 2014). As Hopfe et al. (2013) found, the HR department plays a significant role in influencing the company's overall performance through intelligent decision-making. Businesses must design their human resource approaches to coincide with their organisations' needs (Lapiņa et al., 2014). According to Chowhan et al. (2016), HR responsibilities range from planning, recruitment and reviewing application documents to leave approval and work strategising.

Upon acquisition of the desired group of employees, HR departments should embark on an orientation process aimed at familiarising the employees with the organisation's culture, philosophy and demands (Adlain, 2014). Training and development come in handy at this point. It is not a guarantee that the recruits will automatically adjust to the organisation's culture. Goldstein et al. (2017) insisted that HR must organise further training to help employees to develop the necessary talents and knowledge required to perform efficiently within the organisation. Further, businesses find they need to equip both their new and old employees with new skills and strategies to help them match or beat their competitors (Hill et al., 2014).

Moreover, HRM practices have been shown to influence key performance indicators (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Research does not identify which measures could be the best ones for workers (Allen et al., 2003; Bergiel et al., 2009; Martin, 2011). It was found in the literature review that there have been many research trials to find an agreed measures or specific scales for HRM and service quality. However, there is no complete consensus among academics regarding the validity of these trials.

The next section focuses on the historical background of HRM concepts.

### **2.3 The Historical Background of HRM Concepts**

HRM was conceived out of HR relations, a historic movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that sought to popularise strategic management of organisations for improved employee relations (Sung and Ashton, 2014). In comparison to the past, there is a noticeable difference in the way the workforce is managed today (Breck, 2013). Over time, tremendous changes have materialised in world industry pertaining to the handling of the labour force. Rotich (2015) blamed it on world phenomena such as globalisation and technological advancement. Essentially, the changes brought about by these occurrences have had a significant influence on both the employee and labour relations. Specifically, they have contributed immensely to the shift from the agricultural economy to the industrial economy to the present post-industrial economy (Popkova and Tinyakova, 2013). In the same way, the human resources concept has experienced massive changes by advancing from, first, human capital, to labour or personnel. At present the prevailing concept is becoming the human resources and the other concepts have disappeared from academic writings. Bailey et al. (2017) discussed how far HRM has come since

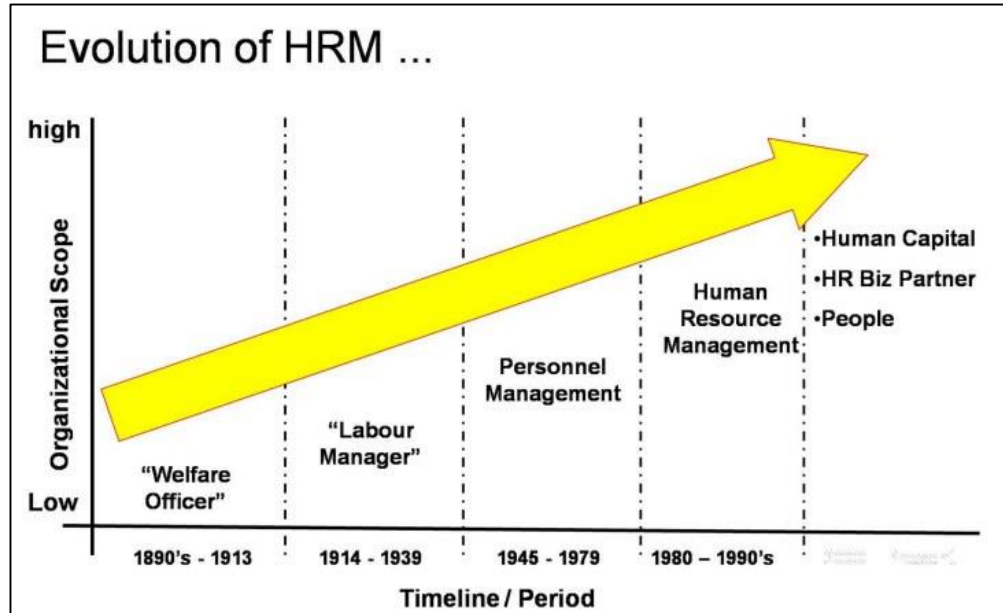
the days of slavery to the present, where organisations usually value and handle the workforce with due respect.

HRM's history dates back to as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Industrial Revolution took form in the USA and parts of Western Europe (Kaufman, 2014). Incidentally, the period of the Agrarian Revolution does not offer much on HRM since it had barely developed by then and labourers were treated with the utmost disregard (Adli and Saleki, 2014). According to Brewster et al. (2016), the industrial revolution saw the United States shift from the agricultural economy to an industrial economy following the anti-slavery campaigns going on around the globe (Nankervis et al., 2017). In addition, around this time, scholars began conducting research on workers in relation to the organisation and then examined the importance of workers to the organisation (Smith, 2015). Further, the concept of the division of labour was popularised, indicating that it would lead to specialisation, which in turn improves quality of production (Bianchi, 2013). Moving on, the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought the ills of the industrial economy to the fore – that is, in relation to workforce welfare (Hartwell, 2017).

The previous literature marked the birth of what was known as personnel management, the equivalent of today's HRM (Storey, 2014). Rotich (2015) split his analysis of the evolution of HRM into four stages: the welfare stage; the welfare and administration stage; the HRM and strategic HRM stage; and finally the present and future of HRM. During the welfare stage (1890–1913) personnel duties such as recruitment and training were carried out by factory supervisors (Kaufman, 2014).

Furthermore, the Hawthorne studies in 1920 pushed factory owners to improve work conditions as well as increasing their labourers' wages. Figure 2 demonstrates the characteristic progress of HRM through the various development stages.

Figure 2: Evolution of HRM



Source: Kaufman (2014).

The actual shaping up of HRM began in the welfare stage (1890–1913). Emphasis on human behaviour and time transformed the workforce thanks to the labour unions formed to protect employee well-being within the organisation (Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman, 2013). Employers focused on performance through training and motivation to ensure employee satisfaction (Torres and Kline, 2013; Sexton, 2018). The next stage, HRM and strategic HRM (1914–late 1939), saw the emergence of strategic HRM, which was characterised by the trade unions as highlighted by Metcalf (2013). Improvements in human resource relations led to the advancement from personnel management to strategic management (Cania, 2014). Overall, organisation–employee relations improved in comparison to the previous stages. The present status of HRM bears a sharp contrast to the previous stages, mainly due to increased globalisation and technological breakthroughs, which constantly force HRM to shift (Smith, 2015). Organisations have been compelled to design their HR approaches according to market conditions (Adli and Saleki, 2014). Currently, HRM is concerned mainly with formulating strategies for attracting, training, developing and retaining superior talent to ensure success. According to Sanders et al. (2014), the future is set to unveil even better development in the field

with the continued broadening of business market spaces and technological advancements. Table 1 shows the difference between the past and the present features of HRM's evolution process.

Table 1: Comparison of personnel management and HRM

Criteria	Personnel Management	Human Resource Management
<b>Time and planning perspective</b>	Short term, reactive, marginal	Long term, proactive, strategic, integrated
<b>Psychological contract</b>	Compliance	Commitment
<b>Employee relations perspective</b>	Pluralist, collective, low trust	Unitarist, individual, high trust
<b>Preferred structure/system</b>	Bureaucratic/mechanistic, centralised, formal defined roles	Organic, devolved, flexible roles
<b>Roles</b>	Specialised/professional	Lately integrated into line management
<b>Evaluation</b>	Cost minimisation	Maximum utilisation (human asset accounting)

Source: Adapted from Rotich (2015).

Table 1 shows the differences between the past and present features of the HRM evolution process according to six criteria:

First, planning was merely on a short-term basis within the personnel management system. However, planning in human resource management is strategic and focuses on the long term. Second, staff compliance was noted in personnel management while staff commitment is best suited to present-day human resource management. Third, trust among employees was very low in personnel management compared with human resource management. Fourth, in personnel management the structure was bureaucratic and depended on formal defined roles. Furthermore, devolved, flexible roles are apparent in human resource management. Finally, the main objective of personnel management is to minimise costs, while in human resource management the aim is to maximise utilisation of resources.

## **2.4 Major Approaches of Human Resource Management**

The area of HRM is symbolised by its “substantial diversity” (Boxall and Purcell, 2011) and lacks a dominant approach or common guidelines. Studies in HRM take a range of views to expose and prove the importance of HRM to businesses. Generally, the effectiveness of HRM in organisational performance could be justified and summarised by four approaches: the universalistic, contingent, and configurational approaches (Delery and Doty, 1996; Alcazar et al., 2005; Jackson et al., 2006; Brewster et al., 2008). Investigation in HRM has naturally been tasked with creating the superiority of one view over another, with slight consideration given to the several possible complementary (Youndt et al., 2004) of the several HRM models. Nevertheless, it seems that enlarging and connecting its “competing” views into one logical form may best help the field of HRM (Becker and Gerhard, 1996; Guest and Conway, 2011). These “approaches of theorising” characterise different modes of the same enquiry, each stressing a particular dimension of authenticity in HRM (Alcazar et al., 2005). The contingency and configurational methods both hypothesise that businesses will gain advantage from specific alignments or “fits” of HRM. On the other hand, the universalistic style argues that there is a sole set of universally appropriate HRM best practices that are connected to organisational benefit (Darwish, 2013).

Below, three main HR perspectives will be critically discussed, and these perspectives will be linked to the aim of the current study. As the aim of this study is to investigate the impact of HR practices on service quality in hotels, it is vital to understand the historical conceptualisation of these HR perspectives comprehensively. The main perspectives will be the contingency perspective, the universalistic perspective and the configurational perspective.

### **2.4.1 The Contingency Perspective**

According to Allen and Wright (2006), HRM practices must be associated with the company's strategy to have their greatest impact on performance. While many scholars mention that HRM practices have to be associated with a company's strategy, few debate how this association can be achieved. Arthur and Boyles (2007), in an early strategic human resource management (SHRM) theoretical piece, mentioned the necessity for companies to “fit” their HRM practices internally

and externally. Internal alignment is happened to simply reveal consistency among HRM practices, while external fit is specified by HRM practices linking the organisation's stage of development (Armstrong, 2010; Farnham, 2010). By recognising how a business changes as it grows, one can recognise how HRM should be changed. Hence, the stage of development is connected to strategy (Wright and McMahan, 2011), and Armstrong and Brown's (2019) justification for external fit conveys the necessity for HRM to fit in with organisational competitive strategy.

The appeal of associating HRM with the organisation's competitive strategy was directly discussed by Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall (1988). They specified four reasons why such an alignment is preferable. First, it gives a wider number of solutions for organisational problems. Second, it guarantees that individuals and other assets are given attention when setting objectives. Third, it guarantees some direct attention to the individuals in the business. Fourth, it decreases the possibility of resource under-utilisation by integrating the organisation's HR system and the capabilities of its employees in its strategy. Wright and McMahan (1992) also supported the importance of fit. They commonly defined SHRM as a form of planned human resource implementations and activities designed to allow a firm to attain its objectives. They focused on two perspectives that differentiate SHRM from traditional HRM: vertical and horizontal fit. Consistent with Bair and Meshoulam (1988), vertical fit is used as the alignment of HRM with the strategic management development of the firm. Horizontal alignment is understood as an exercise of congruence (see also Huselid, 1995; Han et al., 2019).

While both forms of fit are seen as desirable, normally only one, the vertical, is stressed in the debate on the contingency perspective. Cook et al. (2019) described the contingency perspective as suggesting that an organisation's strategic support that the contingency perspective needs that to support organisational effectiveness, HRM practices must be associated with other elements of the firm; however, they only specified strategy as an instance.

Collings et al. (2019) stated that the contingency idea suggests that for any organisational strategy, there will be a linking of HRM strategy and related complementary HRM policies. Although there is still a shortage of proof that this strategic incorporation will directly lead to better performance, a crucial examination finding by Hauff (2019) is that executed HRM policies



and practices depend on the situation and have to be internally consistent and complementary to gain the best outcome. Part of this study will investigate the impact of complementary HR as a whole on service quality. A question will be put to HR managers to see how the HR practices as a bundle affect service quality (see Appendix 1, Question 13).

#### **2.4.2 The Universalistic Perspective**

A second perspective in SHRM is the sense of “best practice”. This idea highlights the necessity of having strongly consistent HRM practices in order to attain high-level performance. The universalistic approach discusses how some HRM practices are consistently better than others and states that all businesses should follow these best practices (Delery and Doty, 1996; Guest and Clinton, 2007). Further, they suggest that universalistic perspectives are the obvious form of theoretical assertion in the SHRM literature because they entail the connection between a given independent and a dependent variable being universal within firms. In the HRM area, two steps are followed to maintain the universalistic approach: first, determining the main strategic HRM practices; and second, discussing the arguments that connect the individual practices to organisational performance (Delery and Doty, 1996). The universalistic model describes a very modest but tremendously powerful framework of SHRM; it has been considered to be accountable for the field's transformation and is seen as its future (McClean, 2009). Delery and Doty (1996) stated that these HRM practices can be either theoretically or empirically connected to overall company performance. Their opinion that there is a growing compromise over what these practices are shows that there is still some disagreement over what is supposed to be the set of practices that will generally lead to better performance. This disagreement may be seen in the following numerous umbrella concepts within the literature in this area: the concept's best practices, high-involvement work practices, high-performance work practices, and innovative HRM practices; these are utilised interchangeably but rarely identified precisely. Even though there is a lack of agreement on a clear definition of an individual set of best practices, this has not stopped the linking of best practices to positive outcomes as many studies have supported these implications.

As mentioned earlier, based on the best practice of SHRM, all companies need to implement a set of HR practices as a “bundle”, assuming that the practices function in a conjointly

complementary style. However, one of the complications with this idea is that different researchers have argued for the inclusion of varying mixtures of practices in the set (Wood, 1999).

Huselid (1995), in his important study on “high-involvement” HRM, explored organisational benefits linked with the implementation of HRM best practices. He observed the implementation of 13 practices in the fields of job design, intensity of recruitment, selection, behaviour assessment, performance appraisal, annual average training period, reward and compensation, promotion system, labour–management relations, grievance procedures, and information sharing. Huselid determined that companies applying high-involvement HRM achieve better short- and long-run financial performance. This result is achieved by decline in turnover and enhancement in productivity, which he also linked to the implementation of high-involvement work practices.

MacDuffie (1995) examined the application of innovative HRM practices in international organisations. From the variables, MacDuffie found that HRM practices tend to increase commitment and motivation. The specific HRM practices observed the hiring standards used for three groups of workers, the level of performance-dependent compensation, barriers between organisations and employees, and the level of training offered to both new employees and existing ones. He discovered that innovative HRM practices assist in enhancing quality and productivity, not individually, but only when part of an internally reliable system. Ambrosini et al. (2009) concluded that the benefits of innovative HRM are greater if it is used in flexible production systems.

Delery and Doty (1996) discussed seven practices that they believed will consistently be positively linked to organisational performance: profit sharing, performance appraisal, internal career opportunities, training, job security, voice mechanisms and job description. In their study of companies in the service industry, they stated that there is positive support for the universalistic approach as they realised that numerous of their individual “best practices”, as well as the bundle of seven practices examined as a whole, were significantly associated with higher organisational profits. Further analysis by Youndt et al. (1996) has shown a positive relationship between high-involvement HRM and quality. Huselid and Becker (1997) agreed that financial performance was linked to the application of high-involvement work practices. But they also discovered that “context” fit improved the benefit of high-involvement implementation. The latter outcome proposes that the greatest benefit of high-involvement work practices is likely

only if these practices are used according to the idea of the contingency perspective. In particular, the degree to which these practices have been used efficiently, the fit between HRM practices, and the fit between the selected practices and the organisation's objectives provide more positive outcomes of high-involvement work practices (Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Theriou and Chatzoglou, 2007). Although the agreement on the universalistic perspective presents, there are obvious differences between studies as to what creates a "best" practice (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Boxall and Purcell (2011) stated that there are not enough studies that can be considered to support a universalistic view of any of the best practices recently promoted in the US or elsewhere. Liu, Hall and Ketchen (2006) agreed with this claim and stated that scholars have dedicated significant efforts to exploring the relationship between HRM practices and organisational performance and to finding support for the idea that they are positively associated. However, fluctuating sample characteristics, the HR practices examined and the research designs used have come up with inconsistent and questionable findings, making the level of the impact hard to predict. While the studies determine the universalistic view could be effective, this view is criticised because it has not been able to clearly identify what other practices are useful and the context in which these HR practices are implemented; consequently, it is fair to mention it has yet to be universally approved. However, Geary et al. (2016) conducted a study on Brazilian companies with operations in Switzerland, Norway, the UK and Canada. They examined universalistic and contingency perspectives and they found that the case showed a unitary (US-sourced) system of HR on all of its companies regardless of the location and the production process. They argue that the universalistic and contingency views are not in opposition but they are complementary. However, Saridakis et al. (2017) recommended investigating further in this field and paying attention to the context in which HR practices are being used.

#### **2.4.3 The Configurational Perspective**

A third perspective has focused on the configurations of HRM practices that forecast excellent performance when used in connection with each other, or linked with the right strategy, or both. In order to be successful, a company must foster an HRM system that attains both horizontal and vertical fit. The configurational view adds a further aspect to the two previous views by focusing on the role of the internal aspects of the HRM task. This approach sees HRM as a

multidimensional set of components. These components can form an unlimited number of configurations from which managers can choose the best patterns in order to manage HR successfully (Alcazar et al., 2005; Guest, 2011). To attain the strategic objectives of companies, HRM systems should be associated with both environmental and organisational situations, and, more significantly, the components of the system need to be internally consistent (Delery and Doty, 1996). For the purpose of achieving the objectives of this thesis, it is really important to understand all of the above-discussed perspectives and examine how managers think about the HR system.

In conclusion, the three main perspectives that have been discussed will help the researcher to understand the nature of HR practices and how organisations treat HR practices in relation to service quality. Also, the functionality of complementary HR, which was discussed above, will be needed in the current study to explore whether the bundle has a different impact compared with the individual HR practice.

## **2.5 HRM Practice Outcomes**

The primary role of the HRM in an organisation is to foster improved performance through the implementation of the various practices that improve employee expertise in the various roles (Alfes et al., 2013). The strategic nature of HRM practices implies that HR departments should design them to match the policies and goals of the organisation (Nankervis et al., 2013). The success of these practices depends on their design and application and employee attitude towards their implementation (Hill et al., 2014). Den Hartog et al. (2013) found that HRM practices have a positive effect on the well-being and performance of the workforce. McDermott et al. (2013) revealed that HR practices dictate the way in which an organisation's human capital functions to meet its goals. Jehanzeb and Bashir (2013) showed that proper design of training and development programmes helps record better results from employee performance. As such, proper application of HR practices is a necessary requirement in HRM. Kehoe and Wright (2013) found that six human resource factors have a direct impact on an organisation's development, as well as performance. These factors were teamwork, compensation, training and development, performance appraisal, employee security, and human resource planning. Incidentally, each of these practices contributes significantly towards the empowerment of employee' knowledge, mindset, and cohesion within the workplace. Moreover, each functions to

improve various facets of organisational operations such as business flexibility, product quality and employee productivity. Both Pfeffer (2014) and Albrecht et al. (2015) agreed on a set of practices that link human resources to improved performance in an organisation. These practices include employee training, employee compensation, knowledge/experience sharing, employee security, team culture, selective recruiting, and minimal rank distinction in the workplace.

Woodrow and Guest (2014) confirmed the outcomes of HRM practices with improved performance through the provision of a favourable atmosphere for the development of talents and teamwork cohesion. Despite HRM practices being open for use by any organisation or business entity, studies have reported failure as a result of faulty application (Kuvaas et al., 2014). However, Linge (2015) found that poor application and utilisation of HR practices affected employee performance throughout an organisation, an example of this being when an organisation recruits the wrong job applicants, and, after hiring them, gives them greater amounts of additional training in order to get better use out of them. However, in spite of this, their performance was still very poor.

Watson (2013) showed that the HRM practices adopted by a company had a direct influence on the accounting profits. In this case, better human resource approaches produced a significant increase in the accounting profits of the organisation. Eze (2015) confirmed that HRM approaches influenced fundamental factors such as profitability and employee turnover.

Brewster (2017) concluded that HRM practices strategically produced the most significant effects on the employees of an organisation. Bratton and Gold's (2017) research revealed a significant association between organisations' productivity and their HRM practices. HRM practices also showed a significant relationship with the performance levels of organisations (Bryson, 2018).

The significance of human resources was reported not only in the context of a single organisation but also that of an entire service industry. Just like in any other industry, HR departments regulates operations in the service sector, promoting business growth and customer satisfaction at the same time (Nair et al., 2013; Oliver, 2014). HRM practices help hotel businesses to adapt as well as to overcome the pressures involved in operating in the sector. However, Bratton and Gold (2017) warned that the success of these practices relies on human resources' capability to

improve an organisation's culture as well as influencing employees' commitment to executing their role professionally.

Due to the competitive nature of the hotel industry, Hoque (2003) advocated the implementation of HRM practices to make businesses competitive. Besides putting hotels in a favourable bargaining position in the market, it allows employees to develop both in terms of personality and as professionals.

## **2.6 HRM Practices in the Hotel Industry**

Boselie et al. (2005) carried out a content analysis of peer-reviewed articles related to the hotel field to highlight which HRM practices were available. Boselie et al. (2005) and then Boon et al. (2011) identified 26 HRM practices related to hotels: training and development, contingency pay and rewards, performance management, recruitment and selection, teamwork and collaboration, direct participation (empowerment, suggestion schemes), good wages (high or above market pay), communication and information sharing, internal promotion, job design (job rotation, job enrichment), autonomy (decentralised decision-making), employment security, benefits packages, formal procedures (grievances), human resources planning (career development/succession planning), financial participation (employee stock, employee shares), symbolic egalitarianism, attitude survey, indirect participation (unions), diversity and equal opportunity, job analysis, socialisation induction and social activities, family-friendly policies and work-life balance, employee exit management (downsizing), professional effectiveness of the human resources department, and social responsibility.

Kilic and Okumus (2005) concluded that HRM practices are extremely relevant to hotel productivity when they studied the effect of 11 practices on productivity in 55 hotels in Northern Cyprus. Furthermore, recent research (e.g., Boon et al., 2011; Rahman et al., 2013) conducted in the hotel industry argued that hotel size, type, age, location, facilities and demand variations affect service quality. However Jones and Siag (2009) asserted that human factors are worthy of study. Accordingly, the central focus in this study will depend only on practices of recruitment and selection; training and development; rewards and incentives; and internal career opportunities. The reasons for this limited number are as follows.

First, it is expected that these practices to boost staff attitude and so to achieve service quality are such that the quality of doing such practices represents a useful indicator for increasing the performance by employees. What is more, quality here refers to concentrating on how well these practices are performed (Birdi et al., 2008). Second, the practices are in theory related to the general aim of service quality (Djellal and Gallouj, 2008). Third, these practices connect the most common practices in both the literature and organisational practice (Huselid, 1995; Singh, 2003; Cho et al., 2006; Birdi et al., 2008). Certainly, other HRM practices might have a role affecting service quality, but in this research they were considered to be of less direct relevance.

It is widely agreed that service quality provided to hotel guests is ultimately determined by the quality of the employee, whose job plays an important role in shaping the customer's experience of the service (Nolan, 2004). In turn, the quality of the employee is undoubtedly determined by an organisation's approach to the management and development of its workforce. For example, O'Mahony and Sillitoe (2001) stated that a professional competitive industry endeavouring to deliver high international standards of service deeply depends on the education and training of its human resources. The following section shows the different HRM practices concerned in this study.

### **2.6.1 Recruitment and Selection**

The build-up to the success of an organisation begins right at the point of staff recruitment (Board, 2017). This explains the significance of the process of recruitment as a crucial HR practice. Equally, it is an important phase in the hotel's endeavour to ensure service quality. First, characteristics of recruiters seem to influence job candidates. Effective recruiter characteristics such as warmth, enthusiasm, concern and empathy have been associated with the likelihood of job acceptance, as has the amount of information provided to candidates by recruiters (Rynes et al., 1991; Maurer et al., 1992). Peters (1997) referred to recruiters who are from those organisational work units seeking applicants are viewed more favourably or credibly; furthermore, they enhance the candidate's view of the company, and, to a lesser extent, recruiters who share demographic characteristics with candidates (e.g., gender, age) are sometimes more effective.

Second, both internal and external sources of job candidates have been researched. Internal recruiting produces employees who perform better, stay longer and have more positive job

attitudes than do employees procured from external sources (Gatewood et al., 2010). However, applicants hired via employee referrals tend to have less turnover than applicants recruited using other methods (e.g., newspaper advertisements). The subject of realistic job previews has been extremely popular in the recruitment literature, as they give candidates a feel for what it is like to work in a particular organisation, by presenting a balanced overview of the position, which in turn increases performance (Haden, 2012).

Unlike recruitment, selection has received a great deal of research attention for many years. Three general techniques are related to effective employee selection. First, much of the attention in the selection literature has focused on the role of pre-employment testing. For example, Schmidt and Hunter (2004) found that the job performance of various government employees selected using cognitive ability tests was approximately half a standard deviation higher than that of employees selected using other methods (e.g., education, experience). Studies such as this contribute to one of the most robust findings in organisational psychology: that general cognitive ability predicts employee productivity in all types of jobs (Peters, 1997). However, other types of selection testing are also effective at predicting the potential of job applicants (Raymark et al., 1997). Examples include personality measures (Tett et al., 1994) and assessment centres (Barrick et al., 2001).

Second, the manner in which the pre-employment interviews are conducted has a significant effect on the efficacy of this selection practice. Berry et al. (2007) found that increased structure led to incremental validity for the interview. Moreover, the validity of the structured interview was comparable to that of cognitive ability tests. Thus, up to a certain point, the more standardised the interview procedure is across applicants, the more the interview operates as an effective selection technique.

Third, person–organisation fit is an important selection factor associated with quality selection. Both practitioners and academicians often recommend that applicants be evaluated in terms of their fit with the company's environment, including its values, norms and culture (French and Rumbles, 2010). Fitz-enz and Davison (2002) used the organisational culture profile to assess person–organisation fit. Their results showed that fit is linked to organisational commitment, turnover and job satisfaction. Dalkir (2013) assessed the fit between employee competences and



job requirements, and their results provided great support for the contention that job performance and satisfaction are associated with person–situation fit.

Most researchers have viewed recruitment and selection as a complex two-way processes that affect each other. For example, the distinction between recruitment and selection becomes tenuous. Selection goes on during recruitment, and recruitment goes on during the evaluation process. Thus, for conceptual purposes, recruitment and selection can be grouped together as ways in which organisations acquire their staff (Thompson, 2014).

Coller et al. (2018) defined recruitment and selection as the process through which a hotel identifies a group of eligible candidates with the ability to contribute towards meeting its set goals. Recruitment is a detailed process that takes proper planning right from the outset. Factors that influence recruitment patterns in an organisation include budget constraints, production levels, changes in technology, competition, unemployment rates, increase/decrease in sales and changes in laws. Service quality is best ensured in the hotel industry through the hiring of individuals with professional experience in hospitality management (Coller et al., 2018).

Researchers globally have investigated the two processes both individually and collectively, so that it can be determined how decisions are made and how things can be improved to convert human resources into a strategic tool for helping the organisation to meet its set goals. When it comes to hiring employees, diversity is extremely important and this has been researched in Thompson's (2014) study of the recruitment and selection of people that live in Canada. In the research, he highlighted the important questions, such as concerning the difference in the outcome between an organisation's decisions to hire an immigrant vs what they actually end up doing. This was addressed by examining the process of selection and recruitment of the organisations that were picked for this specific study, and it was found that it is important to have a holistic approach that pertained to the improvement of recruitment and selection of the immigrants.

Recruitment and selection require a certain level of assessment on the part of the HR department; this helps in recruiting the right individual who can manage internal relationships while also managing customer care (Akroush et al., 2013).

Dalkir (2013) also studied the regulatory issues that need to be sorted out in order to make sure that the right employees are selected in an organisation. A study was carried out by Mahmood

(2015) that found that international HRM policy orientations also determined how employees were recruited and selected. All these policies were in the form of laid-down measures, as suggested by Dalkir (2013). Even though there was no interference in the selection process by the company's headquarters, they had set certain standards that ensured that the people who were recruited met the standards that were set by the headquarters for the organisation.

### **2.6.2 Training and Development**

According to the practice of training and development, despite their being treated as one concept, each term can stand independently. To understand them better one needs to review them separately. Webb (2013) defined employee training as the physically oriented training drills that equip employees with the relevant knowledge and skills needed to undertake their duties professionally. Nimmo and Clapham (2016) defined development as the gradual learning process that readies employees for more complex roles in the long term. The HR practice of staff training and development plays a crucial role in ensuring service quality in the hospitality sector (Hanif, 2013). The practice enables employees to maintain and improve the value of the service they render to their repeat guests. Hence, hotels should be sure to put in place stringent training and development policies so as to follow professionalism in service delivery among their employees (Yong and Mohd-Yusoff, 2016).

Training and development of employees is a crucial aspect of the HR function, regardless of the type of organisation. The value of an organisation is determined by the merit of the employees (Singh, 2014). Conversely, we can say that the worth of employees is determined by work performance that eventually helps in the growth of the company and enhances the performance of its organisation. Therefore, organisations are realising the importance of employee education. Budgeting for the training, education and development of employees can only help create a greater return on investment. Exploring the benefits of and the need for employees' educational training and development, Singh (2014) further emphasised that the direct consequences are reflected in the productivity of the HR. Apart from highlighting the role of educational training of the workforce, his study also examined the awareness about the employee development and training among different organisations in the Punjab. Singh's research revealed that the training and development of the workforce increases the proficiency of employees, overcoming the skills

gap, which augments productivity. Singh (2014) also pointed out that maximum output could be reaped from the human resources employed, which also contributes towards the development of the employees. One of the vital themes explored by this study is the persona of the organisation in the eyes of the employees. When the organisation spends money on the development of employees, it impacts on the overall culture of the entity and a positive image is projected in the minds of the workforce.

The challenge of employee turnover has been explored in depth by researchers Jaiswal and Chandra (2013), who gave a new dimension to the matter. Jaiswal and Chandra (2013) recognised the importance of employee loyalty to any organisation, as its most influential asset, and also recognised that the development and training of the workforce is crucial for business entities. But then they divulged the importance of the learning and development of the workforce, and they concluded that organisations that invest in the professional growth of employees have the means to secure the commitment of employees to the workplace because of human capital. The area of organisational commitment has been analysed in great depth by a theoretical model that examines three levels of commitment: normative commitment, continuance commitment, and affective commitment (Kusluvan et al., 2010; Becker and Huselid, 2011).

Kusluvan et al. (2010) further demonstrated the association of the training and development of employees with the type of the commitments mentioned above. They proposed that the turnover of employees is dependent on the exact nature of the training given to the employees. So, for example, if a hotel invests in training that can be applied to other markets and is pertinent to other organisations as well, and then employee turnover would increase. Conversely, if a company spends capital on specific training related to the functions of that particular organisation, then the likelihood of employee turnover is significantly reduced (Eze, 2015).

The idea of other companies approaching the employees of an organisation who have a highly developed skill set is also explored by Jaiswal and Chandra (2013). They described this phenomenon as “cherry-picking” as opposed to “poaching” but both the terms indicate the same thing – in a competitive environment, companies try to spirit away the skilled employees. Companies expose themselves to turnover by investing in the learning and development of the employees as opposed to employees spending on their own training and development (Jaiswal

and Chandra, 2013). Eze (2015) explained this occurrence as being correlated with the employee commitment model. Eze demonstrated the benefits of the normative and affective commitments when it comes to organisational commitment. His research also depicts the adverse effects of off-site training, emphasising the fact that it also has an undesirable impact on turnover.

### **2.6.3 Rewards and Incentives**

Rewards and incentives as HR practices entail the appreciation of improved performance in employees by the organisation. Essentially, this helps boost employees' morale as well as increasing their involvement in the organisation's operations. Often, hotels reward them in monetary or non-monetary forms depending on the nature of the situation. Satisfaction in both the customer and employee is an essential achievement in the service industry (Lee et al., 2015). In fact, the two go hand in hand. Jung and Yoon (2013) confirmed this assumption in their study by observing a mutual relationship between hotel guests and employee satisfaction. They noted that quality service delivery and positive feedback went both ways. Satisfied employees tended to deliver quality service. In the same way, satisfied customers had a tendency to give positive feedback or better still seek further services.

Bidwell et al. (2013) explored how rewards work in the hospitality industry. Service orientation and its effect on the reward climate and employee attitude was studied and it was found that there was positive correlation between commitment and job satisfaction and that they were linked to the reward climate. This meant that employee should show a high level of commitment and job satisfaction if they perceived a strong service climate and understood the importance of the reward climate. Jin and Huang (2014) talked about the problems that were faced by the Chinese hotel sector in terms of extant incentive mechanisms. It emphasised the importance of the incentive mechanism if the management wanted to enforce job quality and service awareness in employees. It was seen that an employee who knew the vision, mission, goals and objectives of a company was more likely to meet the goal of increasing the profitability of the hotel by attracting more customers. Jin and Huang (2014) elaborated on this: if an organisation wanted to retain its employees, stimulate their ability and raise the level of competitiveness, it needed to upgrade the reward and the salary system. On the other hand, Gunawan and Amalia (2015) stated that salary has only a partial impact on employees' performance, whereas some other types of motivation have more significant impact (i.e., achievement, recognition, responsibility,

promotion and job suitability). In this study, the researcher will inspect the impact of rewards and incentives on service quality.

One thing is certain and that is that the reward factor is not the only thing that works towards job satisfaction. There are several studies that show that it is a relevant measure, but an organisation needs to create a level of commitment in its employees (Birdir and Canakci, 2014). A study by García-Almeida et al. (2015) took a sample of 760 people in a hotel based in Spain. They discovered that what was important in the development of employee commitment was the relationship of the employees with their peers, the management, and HR department. Another study by Abu Khalifeh and Som (2013) studied employee engagement, and their findings were that employees need to know that their efforts are recognised by management. Caitlin (2012) studied part-time workers in the hotel industry and discovered that benefits were also important to them and had an effect on their level of commitment and satisfaction even though they were not given any benefits. One of the reasons why these employees were not offered any benefits was that they were not completely committed to the organisation, so the employers saw no reason to invest in them.

#### **2.6.4 Internal Career Opportunities**

Clarke (2013) noted that internal career opportunities form one of the areas that HRM underperforms in. Naturally, employees feel a sense of motivation when their employer shows interest in their individual growth and development in relation to their career path. Blustein (2013) suggested that employers should actively engage in development of their employees by providing opportunities that enable them to meet their career goals while achieving those of the organisation's at the same time. As an essential HR practice, making internal career opportunities available to employees helps build their confidence in the future. Confidence enables them to commit to the organisation, thereby guaranteeing the provision of quality service.

Within HR, the management of the employees and their careers can be explored from different perspectives. One can look at it from a selection and recruitment perspective, a motivation perspective, a training and development perspective or a promotion perspective. If one looks at it from the promotion perspective, one may then consider Pfeifer (2010), who studied a large German limited company that develops and produces innovative products for the global market.

Pfeifer's work was carried out in order to study and conduct analysis of the determinants of promotions with the help of efficient allocation of employees and the tournament theory. These approaches have been used in a number of different studies that try to find out why HRM decides to promote employees internally. The tournament theory is present in an organisation where several employees compete with each other to get promotion, which would be a step up in the job hierarchy. In such cases, the person who gets the job is the winner and the prize is the upgraded wage (Pfeifer, 2010). The person who is promoted is not promoted on the basis of his/her performance level but on the basis of his/her performance level relative to the performance of the other employees so that others are given an incentive to perform better.

One approach that can be used to promote workers is the allocation of resources, because that is not based on performance but is a measure of meeting the needs of the organisation in terms of employees. What this means is that there will be no competition between employees but if there is a need to promote an employee, that decision will be based on the job antecedents of the given position (Almirall et al., 2014). According to Pfeifer (2010), the determinants of the internal career opportunities include variables such as remaining tenure, overtime, gender, education, contractual working time, age, and absenteeism. Pfeifer (2010) also indicated that the lower level of absenteeism is one of the factors that can lead to the promotion of an employee and this is one of the reasons why attendance is evaluated for appraisal purposes. Karatepe (2013) added that an employee's presence is human capital from which the ability to promote is derived. What this means is that if a person gives more time to an organisation, he/she has a higher chance of being promoted. This is the reason why an employee's age, education, and experience is thought to add to the human capital of the firm and these are the reasons why an employee may get promoted. Human capital is one of the factors that move an employee towards success and promotion.

The next section will discuss the service quality concept.

## **2.7 Service Quality Conceptualisation in the Hotel Industry**

While the service quality literature is well-developed in relation to the hotel industry, a common problem of service quality definition is that it is still defined according to everyone's personal views and perceptions. Patten (2017) concluded that the academic debate on how to conceptualise service quality has not yet been fully resolved. Therefore, there is no consensus on

an agreed service quality concept. What this study will do is add a robust definition of service quality based on a qualitative perspective. The next section will elaborate on scanning the previous literature for the concept of service quality, the concept of dimensions, and their related importance.

### **2.7.1 Service Quality Concept: An Overview**

Service quality definitions have differed from one professional researcher to another depending on the nature of the study as well as on individual understanding of the concept. Given this, the ambiguity of the terminology has necessitated further investigations, which aim to examine the concept broadly in a bid to shed light on its unclear perspectives (Urban, 2013). To begin with, various studies provide specific approaches that help in understanding the concept of service quality. For instance, in their analysis, Evans and Lindsay (2013) advocated the distinction between the quality concept in either the goods sector or the service sector. They demonstrated that there exist significant differences between concepts depending on the sector or subject of reference. On the one hand, the concept of quality in the service sector corresponds to that of the goods sector in the sense that they both translate into increased profit margins and shares in the market as well as customer satisfaction (Heath, 2013). On the other hand, service attributes such as its inseparability, heterogeneous nature and intangibility make explaining it quite a daunting task (Dabholkar, 2015). The influence of these conflicting attributes only materialises when measuring the quality of services rendered. However, this study does not seek to review service quality measuring techniques, and, as this is the case, will stick to reviewing the general concept of the subject instead.

In a bid to comprehend the concept of service quality, it is important to discuss the individual elements that contribute towards its achievement: customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Often, these two components of service quality go hand in hand. For instance, during research the two elements are often treated as a single variable. Alternatively, one may be considered a substitute for the other. Customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty: it is in this sense that Hill and Alexander (2017) acknowledged the connection between customer satisfaction and loyalty in their study, which sought to assess and measure the two elements in relation to service quality. Mullins et al. (2014) examined the relationship between customer loyalty and service

quality and observed particular consistency. Improved satisfaction for customers results in improved customer loyalty (Li et al., 2013).

Further, the concept of service quality could also be viewed through the lens of customer perceptions and expectations of services. Primarily, businesses create services with their customers in mind. Given this, they expect that the final form of the service reflects the needs and requirements of their customers (Mullins et al., 2014). For this reason, customer expectations and perceptions of the quality of the anticipated service play a significant part in maintenance and evaluation of service quality. While expectations refer to the image that customers anticipate receiving, perceptions are the actual judgements they pass on the service provider's ability. Lee (2013) found that service quality increased with the increase in individual customer perceptions of prices. Kirillova and Chan (2018) recorded an overwhelming response from clients following increased customer expectations because of the attractive, aesthetic appeal of official hotel websites. Understanding the quality of service as seen through the eyes of the guest is one of the most effective ways of figuring out the concept of service quality.

Service quality refers to the process of evaluating levels of customer satisfaction with the services delivered to them by a particular business or organisation (Brunnström et al., 2013). Goetsch and Davis (2014) defined service quality as the mechanism through which businesses meet and surpass the expectations of their customers. It is noted that different studies conducted on this subject provide varying definitions of service quality. In any case, all these definitions seem to point towards a service provider's struggle or commitment to ensure improved delivery of quality service, the main aim being to guarantee customer satisfaction (Saeed et al., 2014). On occasion, the services delivered may not correspond adequately with the customer's requirements and needs. In such instances, Grönroos and Gummerus (2014) opined, service quality is evaluated in terms of how it compares to the expectations of the individual.

According to Lai et al. (2016), service quality provides the platform on which players in the service industry can understand their customers. Following improved understanding, businesses are able to meet their customers' expectations in a bid to maintain a cordial yet mutual business relationship (Wang et al., 2016). Izogo and Ogba (2015) confirmed that the hotel industry depends significantly on the delivery of quality service for its survival. Further, tourism clients



have a knack for expecting exceptional services and expect that the services delivered to them during their stay at a hotel match their expectations (Hussain et al., 2015).

Tuntirattanasoontorn (2018) revealed that service quality improvement is necessary for the development of the entire hotel industry. Setting a certain standard of service quality for all hotels helps record a collective improvement for the entire sector. This kind of approach to service quality helps ensure a fair distribution of customers to individual hotels in the business. Further, it helps inhibit the growth of unhealthy competition that emerges due to the uneven distribution of travelling guests across hotels. Similarly, Kasiri et al. (2017) found that service quality is affected by standardisation and customisation of services to the customers.

### **2.7.2 Service Quality Dimensions**

It is believed that quality in hotels is an ongoing journey of continuous improvement. It starts with hotel employees, who are interested in achieving career growth, and ends with customers, who want to get value for money. Success would be ensured if organisations were devoted to high standards of service quality (Kokkranikal et al., 2013; Sivakumar et al., 2014).

The concept of service quality dimensions has been extensively researched in different industries (Ladhari, 2009a; Bitner et al., 2010; So et al., 2013; Neuhofer et al., 2015). Unfortunately, these studies do not use the best measures of service quality in the hotel industry (Ladhari, 2009b). Zeglat (2008) concluded that two main factors are suitable for summarising the concept of service quality, i.e., tangible and intangible dimensions in the hotel industry. While tangibility refers to physical and technical quality (Stefano et al., 2015), hidden attributes represent intangible dimensions (Star and Stylianides, 2013; Yoo and Bai, 2013; Radojevic et al., 2015; Lee, 2016). It could be concluded from the above paragraphs that there is still no consensus about the dimensions of the service quality concept so far.

According to Prentice (2013), service quality operates in the same way as trust. It implies that hotels must build and preserve service quality (trust among the customers) over time in a bid to retain their customers. In itself, customer retention depends on, among other things, their satisfaction and loyalty. Prentice (2013) aimed to examine the relationship between customer loyalty and service quality in hotel casinos. Primary data obtained through interviews showed

that customer loyalty differed according to the specific dimensions of service quality. Also, the responses provided depended on individual guest service perceptions and expectations. The study established that service quality did indeed influence customer loyalty. However, the degree of loyalty depended on the particular dimension of service quality under scrutiny. In another study with almost identical objectives, Shi et al. (2014) acknowledged a positive relationship between service quality and customer loyalty while using customer satisfaction as the main determinant of service quality. Still, service quality dimensions influenced levels of satisfaction and loyalty. Some of the areas that were inspected in the study were reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangibility. The analysis of these five dimensions (Table 2) will provide an even better understanding of the concept of service quality.

Table 2: Service quality dimensions

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Description</b>
Reliability	Dependability, keeping promises
Assurance/security	Confidence in service delivery
Empathy/appreciative	Understanding customer requirements and needs
Responsiveness	Promptness, timeliness, willingness to act upon customer request
Tangibility	Physical services/facilities such as rooms, recreational equipment

Source: Watiki (2014).

The review has established that service quality cannot stand on its own. Indeed, the concept depends on other factors or dimensions, which collectively contribute to improved quality of service delivery (Amin et al., 2013). For one thing, the reliability of service quality is a requirement in the modern business market and not only in the hotel industry. Essentially, it involves putting a business's ability to keep its promises to the customers to the test (Özer et al., 2013). Basically, customers expect that the hotel they have booked into will deliver the services it promises to provide with great accuracy. According to Benezech and Coulombel (2013), reliability of service is achieved when customers do not express their disappointment in the quality of the services rendered to them. More importantly still, these aforementioned scholars showed that the reliability of service quality significantly improved customer loyalty.

Assurance is yet another dimension used in evaluating service quality. According to Chin and Tsai (2013), assurance in the concept of service quality refers to employees' ability to instil a feeling of conviction and confidence in the firm's customers. Chen (2013) investigated factors that affected service quality in international hotels. Chen demonstrated that customer assurance of the quality of services increased proportionally with the actual increase in service quality. Another study conducted by Saleem and Raja (2014) studied the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, and, further, the resultant impact it had with regard to customer loyalty. In a questionnaire-administered survey, Saleem and Raja (2014) collected data among various five-star hotels using a sample of 250 participants. They concluded that customer satisfaction depended on the quality of services rendered within a hotel. Eventually, the effects of customer satisfaction spread over to influence their loyalty.

Responsiveness refers to the attitude of the service provider towards the customer. Responsiveness of services is evaluated through the swiftness (promptness) with which the service providers move to attend to the issues or requests brought forth by the customers. Using responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy and tangibility as variables, Poku et al. (2013) investigated how the five factors influenced customer loyalty and satisfaction. They indicated that all the factors except tangibility had a positive influence on customer satisfaction and thereby their loyalty. Similar findings were recorded in research conducted by Amin et al. (2013). From a general perspective, they investigated the impact of the service quality dimension, including service responsiveness, on customer satisfaction. They showed that the various service quality dimensions contributed significantly towards the satisfaction of hotel guests.

A discussion of the concept of service quality is not complete without discussing the remaining two factors: empathy and tangibility. Min et al. (2015) defined empathy as the capability to understand someone's feelings and the need to respond by providing services that correspond to their specific requirements. Empathy helps hotels to assess their guests and deliver services that suit them almost perfectly in a bid to earn their loyalty. Shafiq et al. (2013) examined the role played by empathy in sustaining the hospitality industry. They investigated empathy as a characteristic in human beings, which ultimately influences their relationship with their fellows. Concerning the hotel industry, empathy helps cultivate a better understanding of customer needs among hotel employees.

On the other hand, the tangibility of services refers to the physical components that go along with the services, such as the comfort and cleanliness of the rooms/restaurants in the hotel industry. Panda and Das (2014) illustrated the influence of tangibility on service quality as perceived by customers. Their investigation revealed that this dimension plays a significant role in improving service quality. Incidentally, five-star hotels scored highly in this area, considering the great comfort that their rooms and other physical facilities offer to their esteemed guests. Chong (2017) reported a positive relationship between service tangibility and co-branding strategy in hotels. Guests seemed to develop positive perceptions concerning the tangibility of hotel services. Also, Alexiev et al. (2015) found that service tangibility acted as a moderator in any given intense innovative situation; this often helped to improve the relationship between the customer and the service provider. In this way, service tangibility helps maintain service quality.

### **2.7.3 The Importance of Service Quality in Hotels**

Service quality is crucial to success in the hospitality industry. Customer satisfaction is understood to be anticipated by service quality (Sudin, 2011). Nasution and Mavodon (2005) determined that the hotel industry should focus specifically on delivering quality service with respect to the aspects of perceived quality that are the most important to guests. Nowadays, the Internet and social media make it easier than ever for guests to explain and share their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, thus influencing others (Ekiz et al., 2012). As a result, hotel managers must focus on the quality of every detail of service faced by their guests, and the guests' emotional judgements about their hotel stays become the foundation for the hotels' efforts to distinguish themselves from rivals and attain competitive advantages (Chang and Horng, 2010). Homburg et al. (2005) found substantial cultural differences in the influence of the factors on consumer opinions of service quality and therefore on satisfaction. Additionally, Walls et al. (2011) implemented a meta-analysis of hospitality management studies and determined that customer experiences are multidimensional and unique to each condition and consumer, cautioning that, in this domain, quantitative methodology may not be universally generalisable. Most studies on five-star hotels have used quantitative methodology, such as the popular SERVQUAL survey instrument established by Parasuraman et al., (1988), which has been the foundation of many studies (Amenumey and Lockwood, 2008; Min et al., 2009; Wu and Liang, 2009; Al Khattab and Aldehayyat, 2011). Nevertheless, there have been fewer qualitative studies on service quality and satisfaction. The goal of this study is to explore the impact of HR practices

on service quality in Canadian five-star hotels. This study is significant because it addresses the relationship between HR practices and service quality using qualitative methodology to access insights into the experiences of HR managers, supervisors and workers in their evaluation of how HR practices affect service quality, thus increasing the scanty qualitative-based literature on this topic. The study is also significant because there has been even less qualitative exploration of this subject in Canada, which was the location of the study. Additionally, the study is needed due to the high competition in the hospitality industry as well as the labour shortage issue in Canadian tourism and the hospitality industry.

In the present competitive environment, where most hotels have similar services, the survival of hotels depends on providing service quality that ensures customer satisfaction (Mohsin and Lockyer, 2010). Ineson et al. (2011) emphasised the increasing role of service quality in light of the worker motivation required to support the brand image of the hotel. They confirmed that the personal attributes of the front-line staff of hotels are strongly linked to guests' perceptions of service quality. Also, they pointed out that key indicators for exceptional service include workers with a passion for service and for their work, as well as workers' honesty, credibility and ability to deal with problems. Prentice (2013) noted that maintaining top quality is the main way that hotels can stay relevant in the market and acquire new customers as well as retaining the old ones. The process of ensuring service quality is viewed from two perspectives. One, it is viewed from the perspective of old customers and new customers. While it is easier to maintain existing customers, acquiring new ones is quite an uphill task for most businesses (Mok et al., 2013). Balciunas et al. (2014) highlighted that it is cheaper to retain old customers than to attract new ones. Hence, the solution to this problem lies within the realm of service quality.

It should be emphasised that the importance of service quality to the hospitality industry in general can never be underestimated – with reference to hotels in particular (Kandampully et al., 2015). Service quality facilitates improved communication through word of mouth, which in turn improves customer–service provider relationships (Jasinskas et al., 2016). As Dhar (2015) found, the quality of service dictates the nature of the mutual relationship that exists between service providers and their customers. Given this, it is the responsibility of the hotel management and hotel employees to consistently ensure high quality of service in a bid to retain existing customers as well as attract new ones. Molina-Azorín et al. (2015) described service quality as the outcome recorded from the encounter between service providers and their customers. During

this encounter, the hotel guests subject the services provided by hotel employees to intense evaluation, which eventually leads them to develop either loyalty or disloyalty towards the hotel (Brlečić Valčić and Bagarić, 2017). Naturally, in the eyes of the customer, each service is unique and is evaluated against the quality of a previous experience, either with the same service provider or with another (Xiang et al., 2015). Before soliciting the services of a particular hotel, the guests create expectations about the anticipated service (Luo and Qu, 2016). These expectations are formed with respect to a specific set of extrinsic and intrinsic cues as defined by the customers themselves (Yildiz, 2015). For instance, guests may develop loyalty to a given hotel because of its affordable prices (extrinsic cue) or the quality of its cuisine (intrinsic cue). Thus, for a long time, guest expectations regarding service have been influenced by quality cues, which satisfy their needs adequately and, more so, those that compare closely to their experiences in the past. Tsao et al. (2015) illustrated that hotel ratings have a significant influence on customer choice of hotels. They found most customers were likely to seek the services of hotels with higher ratings than those with lower ratings. This implied that travellers cared more about the quality of service than they worried about the prices of the services rendered in a given hotel. Berezina et al. (2016) reported that quality service enabled hotels to retain their customers. Ultimately, this helped them gain their loyalty. Initiatives taken to ensure customer loyalty include incentives, and reduced prices for repeat customers.

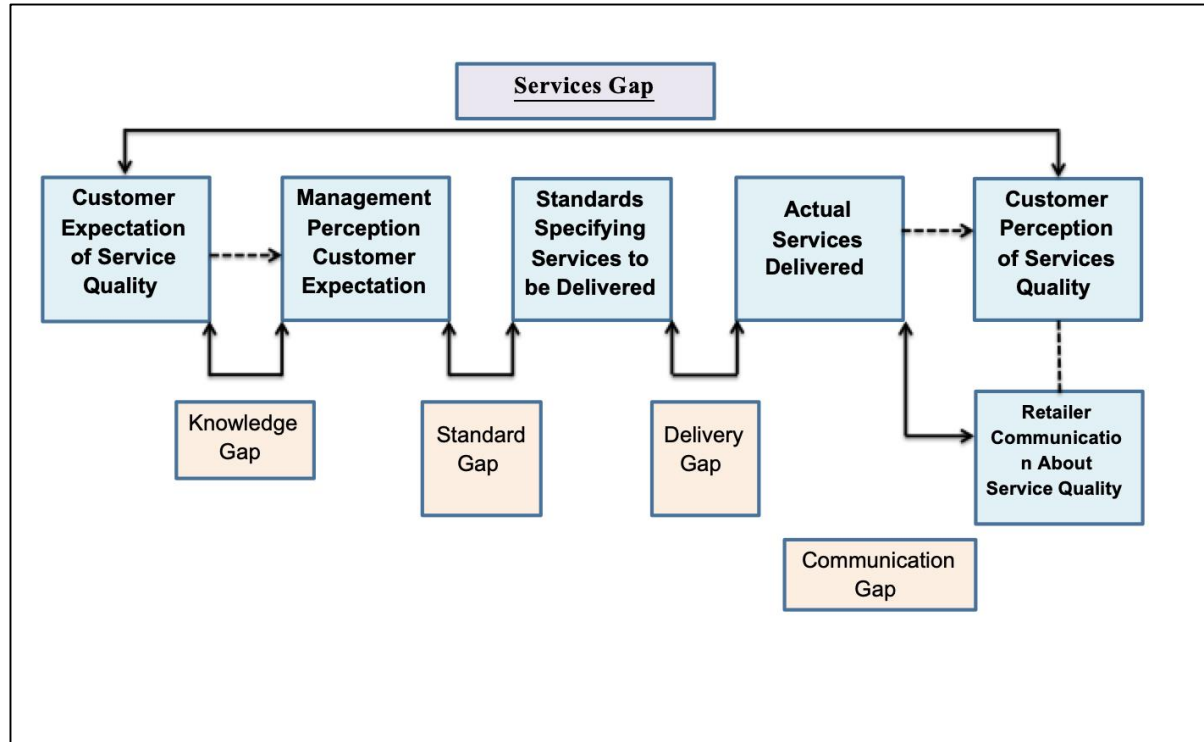
Some reviews have established the necessity of service quality within the hotel industry. Specifically, they have discussed its significance not only for the development of the individual stakeholders in the industry but also for the betterment of the sector as a whole (Pereira-Moliner et al., 2016). Quality of service remains the single most essential requirement in the life of a business, more so in the contemporary setting where exceptional service delivery is the focal point. However, maintaining a significant level of quality service proves challenging to most businesses (Fakharyan et al., 2014; Oliver, 2014). It is noted that customer satisfaction is one of the most important service quality outcomes (Agbor, 2011; Howat and Assaker, 2013; Marković and Raspor Janković, 2013; Yu et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2014; Bansal and Taylor, 2015; Kim et al., 2015; Dean, 2016; Hapsari et al., 2016).

#### **2.7.4 Evaluating Service Quality in Hotels**

The review has established the necessity of service quality within the hotel industry. Specifically, it has discussed its significance not only for the development of the individual stakeholders in the industry but also for the betterment of the sector as a whole (Pereira-Moliner et al., 2016). In this regard, hotels suffer substantial losses due to instances of below-average service. Often, these losses materialise in the forms of reduced bookings, increased customer complaints and, ultimately, decreased profits (Chen and Chen, 2014). Service quality barriers are the specific factors that consistently limit the quality of service in an organisation. Service quality is evaluated from the perspective of customers. Kokkranikal et al. (2013) advised that managers should learn to understand their customers' needs in a bid to overcome the many barriers that hinder the delivery of quality service.

Ever since the initial adaptation of service-quality-related paradigms by Parasuraman et al., (1985), numerous scholars have attempted to examine further the factors that influence quality of service (Chin and Tsai, 2013). Liat et al. (2014) identified quality gaps as the factors that limit the quality of services provided in the hotel industry. Aiming to deliver quality service as well as meeting particular guest expectations is any hotel's primary operational goal. Often, contention in service delivery arises mainly following conflicts between the two main factors related to this subject: customer expectations/perceptions and the services delivered by the service provider (Sivakumar et al., 2014). According to Martínez and Bosque (2013), the reason for the service quality barriers is the gaps that exist between guest expectations and the quality of the services eventually rendered to them. Besides this, there exist other gaps with similar or less effect on service quality in the hotel industry. Overall, the gaps include the customer/service gap, the knowledge gap, the policy gap, the delivery gap and finally the communication gap. Each gap corresponds to a specific situation, which limits the quality of service. For instance, the knowledge gap addresses the existing inconsistencies between customer expectations and management perceptions of customer expectations. Mostly, the quality gaps address issues that influence both the customer's and the provider's interaction with services. Figure 3, below, illustrates the interconnections between the various aspects of service provision. Further elucidation of the gaps will be provided in the ensuing discussion.

Figure 3: The Quality Gaps Model



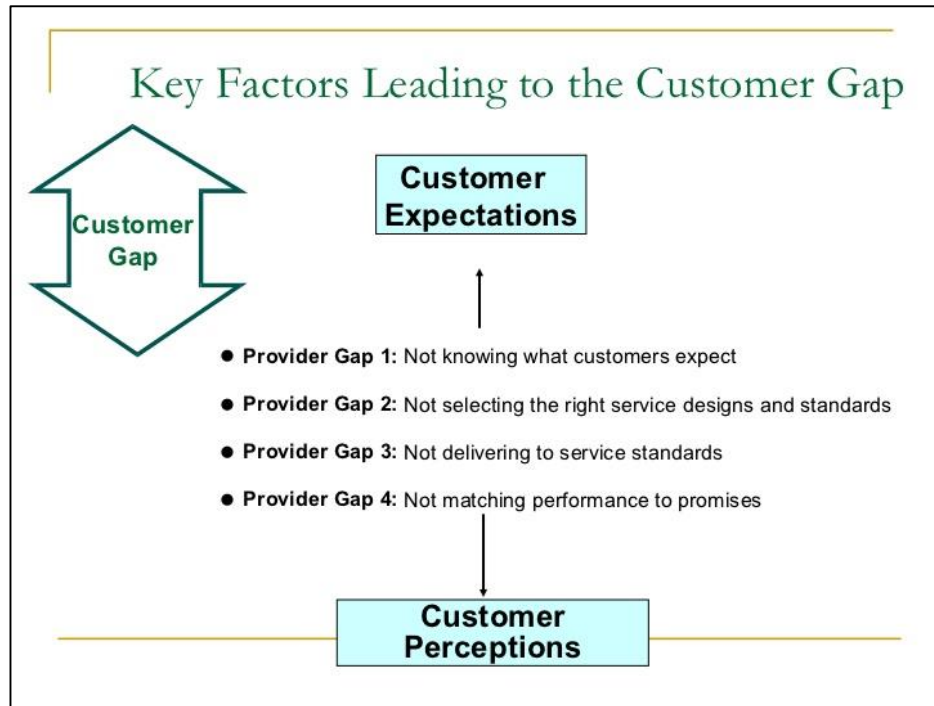
Source: Bitner et al. (2010).

The first gap, which also doubles up as the commonest barrier to quality service in the hotel industry, is the customer gap. According to So et al. (2013), the customer gap poses the greatest threat to service quality in the hotel industry. For one, it bases its logic on the ideologies of customer expectations and perceptions of the anticipated service. On the one hand, customer expectations refer to the anticipated value of service in accordance with the prevailing circumstances. In the contemporary setting, customer expectations depend on, among other things, cultural background, past experiences, demographics, and personality. Figure 4, below, shows the main factors that lead to the customer gap. Fundamentally, the customer gap materialises due to a number of mistakes on the part of service providers. For one, most service providers fail to understand their customers due to inadequate research. In light of this revelation, hotel managers ought to conduct extensive research on the customers' likes and preferences in order to ensure that they provide precisely what the hotel's guests need. Second, hotel managers must make the right choice of service designs and standards to enable them to operate



effectively. Furthermore, they must ensure the delivery of up-to-the-mark services according to the customer's needs. Finally, hotels must align their performances with the actual promise. See figure 4, below.

Figure 4: Factors Leading to the Customer/Service Gap



Source: Modified from Parasuraman et al. (1988).

Another common barrier to service quality in the hotel industry is, without a doubt, the knowledge gap, which indicates the discrepancies between customer expectations and management opinions of consumer expectations. Specifically, it highlights the differences between customers' expectations and the actual service. Figure 5, below, illustrates the trend in the gap. Mostly, the gap occurs when hotel managers fail to interpret or align the services their facilities offer with their guests' expectations (Neuhofer et al., 2015). According to Li et al. (2013), the existence of the knowledge gap shows that a hotel is directing its efforts towards meeting non-existent guest needs. Further, Star and Stylianides (2013) posited that hotel managers ought to develop a deeper understanding of their guests' needs to enable them to provide relevant services only. To overcome this barrier/close the gap, hotels must conduct

comprehensive market research. They need to bridge the gap between their perceptions of the services they deliver and the customer's service expectations.

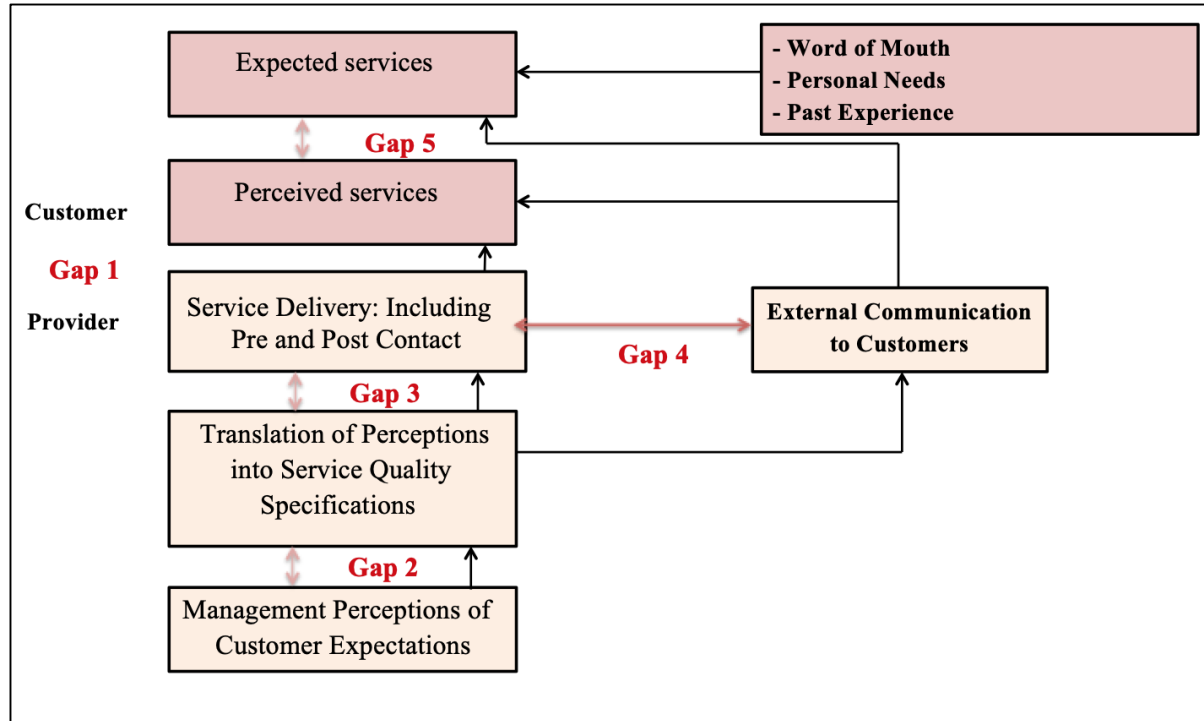
Figure 5: Knowledge Gap



Source: Bitner et al. (2010).

Another barrier to ensuring service quality in the hotel industry is the policy gap. The problem addressed in this gap is concerned with the hotel management's ability to translate existing service delivery policies into a bid to offer improved services to their esteemed guests (Yoo and Bai, 2013). Figure 6, below, shows the gap model of service quality as adapted by Parasuraman et al. (1985). The policy gap (illustrated in Figure 6/Gap 3) highlights the challenge that arises between management perceptions and the translation of companies' energies into the desired quality of service. In effect, this gap reflects a manager's failure to interpret hotel policies for his/her employees. According to Holland (2014), prevalence of the policy gap could result in poor design of hotel accommodation packages and the inability to maintain the required level of customer service, among other things. Holland (2014) further averred that this gap is a major cause of customer loss as customers seek better alternatives elsewhere.

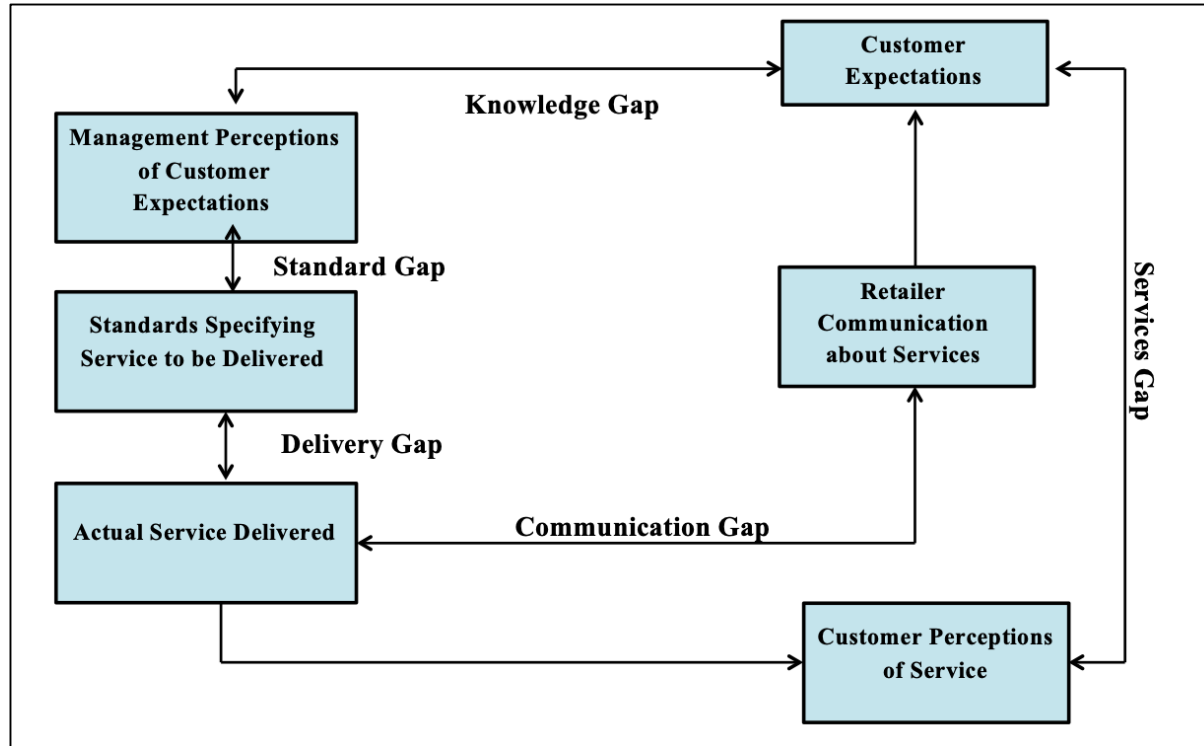
Figure 6: Gap Model of Service Quality



Source: Parasuraman et al. (1985).

The fourth quality gap in service quality is the delivery gap. As shown in Figure 7, it indicates the inconsistencies that occur between the specified service quality and the actual service delivered (Radojevic et al., 2015). There exists more than just a single approach to deciphering the service gap within an organisation. For one, the organisation, a hotel in this case, may define/specify services and policies required to satisfy its customers but fail to equip its employees with the relevant expertise or put in place conditions that meet customer expectations (Stefano et al., 2015). Consequently, the hotel workforce becomes ill-prepared to meet the needs of the hotel's guests satisfactorily (Lee et al., 2016). Again, Stefano et al. (2015) posited that it might occur the other way around, with the hotel having experienced personnel but poorly designed policies/services. Often, the service delivery gap materialises because of inadequate HR management policies, limited product knowledge and poorly developed teams, among other factors.

Figure 7: Model of the five quality gaps



Source: Parasuraman et al. (1985).

Figure 7, above, depicts the communication gap, which highlights the barriers to service quality that stem from a lack of proper communication about services offered by the service provider. The communication gap addresses the disconnection between external hotel communication and the actual accommodation services rendered at the premises (Yarimoglu, 2014). In most instances, this gap materialises through over-hyped service promotion or advertisement, which raises guest expectations but never lives up to its billing (Lee, 2016). As a result, a communication gap occurs following the mismatch between communication and the delivered service. Most likely, disappointed and disgruntled guests will seek better alternatives that more closely meet their expectations and needs.

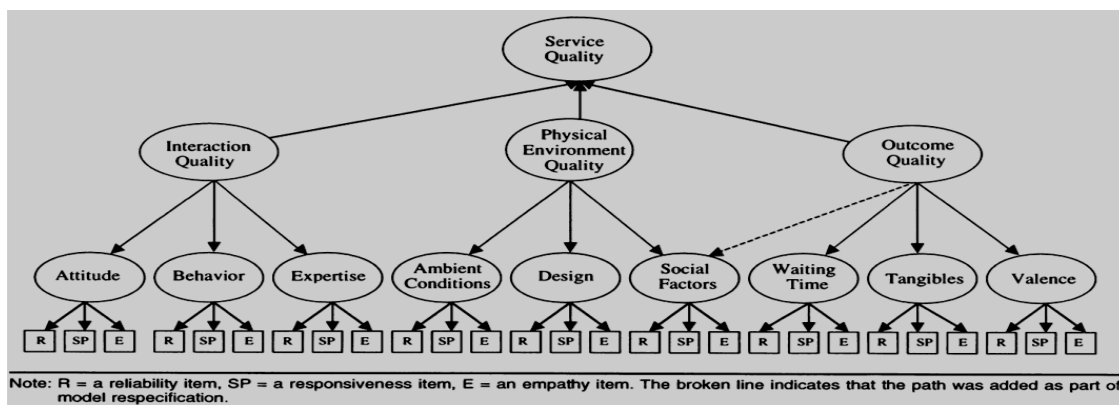
While finding an agreed definition of service quality for the hotel industry is difficult, evaluating it is even more so. This section of the literature review will critically examine service quality measurement methods used in hotels. Regarding measuring service quality, two studies

(Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988) developed the most widely recognised measure, SERVQUAL, to measure the service quality gap between customers' expectations and perceptions (Figure 4).

Many studies (e.g., Chin and Tsai, 2013; Star and Stylianides, 2013; Zaibaf et al., 2013; Chen and Chen, 2014; Liat et al., 2014; Dhar, 2015; Kandampully et al., 2015; Lo et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2016) came after developing SERVQUAL to another specific scale – their modifications of service quality dimensions also being closer to the five main dimensions of “RATER” (reliability; assurance; tangibles; empathy; and responsiveness) by Parasuraman et al. (1988). Grönroos (1990) further considered service recovery as an important dimension of SERVQUAL measures, while Cronin and Taylor (1992) developed their scale from SERVQUAL to SERVPERF in favour of evaluating only the actual perceived quality without taking a gap score with expectations.

Gazzoli et al. (2010) measured service quality in restaurants depending only on the employee-related aspects that coincide with the hierarchical approach of Brady and Cronin (2001) (see figure 8). Their scale was comprised of 18 items covering the three dimensions of interaction quality, outcome quality and overall service quality. Because of the low control of staff over the physical quality dimensions, they excluded it in their perceived service quality evaluation.

Figure 8: Service quality hierarchical approach



Source: Brady and Cronin (2001).

Feili et al. (2012) reported that, to date, more than 30 measurement scales for service quality in different industries have been developed – for example, the modifications Getty and Getty (2003) made to the SERVQUAL dimensions to produce the Lodging Quality Index (LQI).

Tse and Suk-Ching (2009) added another consideration for service quality measurement in hotels. They evaluated service quality by recognising the main problems facing customer-contact employees in the Critical Incident Technique (CIT).

The use of online guest reviews to evaluate hotel service quality through websites is growing as well, e.g., Lu and Feng (2010), in their comparison of international and local Chinese hotel customers' perceptions of service quality, used customer reviews posted on global websites (e.g., [www.Tripadvisor.com](http://www.Tripadvisor.com), [www.Hotels.com](http://www.Hotels.com)).

However, most of the literature on service quality measurement is mainly concentrated on customers rather than the employees of the organisation. This prompted the researcher to focus on the employees as a sample for investigation, since many studies have already demonstrated the significance of customer-contact employees in creating and providing quality of service (e.g., Parasuraman et al., 1985; Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Chand, 2010). Service quality measurement in this study is based on managers', supervisors' and line staff's perspectives. Although most of the studies conducted in this area have used customers as a primary source of data, a sufficient number of empirical studies have indicated that service provider perceptions are highly correlated with those of customers, not only in their overall assessment of service quality but also in their evaluations of the firm's service climate, practices and procedures (e.g., how much managers emphasise service and how well managers run the service (e.g., Ueno, 2008; Zeglat, 2008)).

In other words, a high degree of consistency has been found between providers' self-reports of customers' perceptions and customers' actual perceptions of service quality. In this respect, Mangold and Babakus (1991) emphasised that service providers can be superior to customers as a source of service quality data since they have a backstage view, allowing them to get more details of the service quality than customers, who have a frontstage perspective only. Hence, service providers' perspectives enable hotels to identify and predict activities and problems that go unnoticed by customers.

Accordingly, the appropriateness of the service provider's perspective was discussed and proven in the literature as a valuable tool for evaluating service quality. Several studies have provided justification for the appropriateness of such an approach. For example, Schneider and Bowen (1985) said that service providers' approaches provide accurate customer satisfaction data as they appear to be quite sensitive in terms of how their customers are treated.

Sergeant and Frenkel (2000) also appreciated the appropriateness of such an approach since service providers (customer-contact employees) are the face of any organisation and their interaction with customers is considered a part of the service. Therefore, they can affect customers' perceptions and satisfaction. In addition, the employees who provide services offer many significant insights into the processes, shortfalls and problems of service quality since they are, in a way, internal customers of the service company (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

Berry et al., (1994) summarised into two points some benefits of measuring service quality from the provider's perspective. First, a service provider's experience can reveal what problems occur in the service system, why they happen and how to overcome them. Second, a service provider is able to predict when the system is going to be down.

Tsang and Qu (2000) used the management perspective (respondents ranged from general managers to supervisors) to measure service quality provided in Chinese hotels, in order to compare it with customers' expectations and perceptions of service quality. They found some discrepancies between customers' perceptions of actual service delivered and the standards of service quality that managers perceived which were higher. However, they found that managers have a reasonably good understanding of guests' expectations. Finally, they concluded that management's perceptions and evaluations of service quality delivery are a useful tool in identifying service problems and service failure points in the hotel industry.

In light of the previous discussions, it can be accepted that a hotel's service providers, whether they are customer-contact managers or employees, have a valid perspective, which is a useful source of service quality evaluation. Thus, such an approach can be used for service assessment rather than asking the customers themselves, especially if it is not possible to contact the customers directly. Accordingly, the service providers' perspective, instead of those of customers, was used for conceptualising and then evaluating service quality in light of the HRM practices' effect.

## **2.8 The Relationship Between HRM Practices and Service Quality in Hotels**

Hotels, like other organisations in the service sector, constantly come under intense pressure to ensure customer loyalty in the competitive business environment. To beat this competition, hotels must put in place correct mechanisms that enable them to acquire new customers while striving to retain the old ones (Dey et al., 2013). Ultimately, such initiatives provide for the formulation of better hotel practices, improved service design and the delivery of superior services. Essentially, through its human resource management (HRM) department, an organisation plays a central role in improving the quality of services it offers, which ultimately influences both its customers' and employees' levels of satisfaction (Wang et al., 2016). According to Ross (2017), HRM is the lifeline of the service industry. The industry depends on discipline to provide grounds for the development of raw talent into the eventual product, which helps deliver quality service. While one may argue that employees are directly responsible for the provision of quality service in a hotel, it is also true that the performance depends on motivation, satisfaction and training provided by the human resource that drives them to work harder. For this reason, the present study suggests that HRM practices are a significant determinant of service quality. Its contribution towards ensuring a high quality of service delivery in the hotel industry cannot be underestimated.

Many studies (e.g., Claudia, 2013; Dey et al., 2013; Al-Refaie, 2015; Dhar, 2015; Lee et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016; Ross, 2017) have been conducted to investigate the impact of HRM on the delivery of quality service regardless of the field. Most investigators have found it convenient to focus their studies on the hotel industry, a major player in the service sector, which depends entirely on service delivery. Therefore, it was decided to select the hotel sector in order to explore this relation between HR practices and service quality.

Busswell et al. (2016) examined the critical role that people and staff have in the process of delivering service quality in the leisure and tourism sector. The service encounter and the contact between employees and customers can so often determine the overall perception of a transaction.

From reviewing these earlier studies, it can be realised that research gap is exist. First, although additional research found a positive connection between HRM practices and service quality, these studies did not give the reader a consistent answer regarding which HRM practices



contributed to the service quality. Second, when searching in service sectors other than hospitality so as to explore in depth the problem's roots, some of these issues could be stated that there is no consensus of the concept of service quality and its evaluation method found in both literature and empirical evidence. These complexities might have supported the views as every scholar defines the concept according to his/her own thoughts.

Service Quality research has mainly focused on process enhancement. However, HR considers the philosophy of a firm to be the cornerstone of service quality. HR now plays an important role in sustainability (Baum, 2018). Hotels are now driven by evolving technology, increasing consumer demand, high productivity standards, globalisation, and the competitive need for quality. This brings extraordinary importance to the role of HRM in supporting the realisation of service quality. Vloeberghs and Bellens (1996) stressed that, to foster a culture of quality, an organisation needs to make its HR department a keystone in its different functions. Some studies have been done to verify the significance of HRM in implementing quality. For example, studies by Longenecker and Scazzero (2000) and Tsaur and Lin (2004) implied that HRM concerns are vital both in the introductory and operational stages of quality management and that successful businesses pay more attention to the human side of the quality process than ineffective businesses. Another study by Presbury et al. (2005) mentioned that the HRM role has played a part in tactical decision-making and accountability for the communications, training and involvement essential to encourage an understanding of quality. Tang and Tang (2012) added that that HR involvement in applying and sustaining quality is not optional: it is a critical element if quality management is to achieve its full potential.

Although the literature highlights the significance of HRM in the achievement of service quality, studies have recommended further investigation into this area in the hotel industry in general (e.g., Alleyne et al., 2005; Anh et al., 2005; Aspridis and Kyriakou, 2012; Boella and Goss-Turner, 2013; Al-Refaie, 2015; Basak and Khanna, 2017), and in the Canadian hotel industry specifically (e.g., Thompson, 2014; Zopiatis et al., 2014a; Murray et al., 2017; Willie et al., 2017; Blayney et al., 2018). Therefore, one of the objectives of this study is to explore the impact of HR practices on service quality in the Canadian hotel sector. The strategic incorporation of HRM within service quality implementation makes it necessary to review the definition and the dimensions of HRM. Boella (1993) described HR practices as an expression of management style. HR practices contain those actions that assist management to attain its goals. To expand on

this, Tyson and York (1996) debated whether the basis of HR activities is the HR plan. This is where the company's HR objectives are set out with regard to numbers of workers within each function area, sales and management, as well as the proficiencies needed and the expenses of appointing workers. In the HR plan, the company's need for employees is considered under its recruitment plan, which allows a selection procedure in the labour market. Once chosen, candidates need orientation and training. After that, an appraisal plan is established to assess the performance of staff against the accomplishment of planned objectives. Tyson and York (1996) also stated that along with the previous process, there is a need to pay attention to employees' satisfaction that is embodied in rewards, incentives and internal career opportunity schemes.

Madera et al., (2017) unified the HR practices discussed earlier into a service quality framework to detect standards that assist in implementing service quality. They suggested some points to follow in order to achieve service quality. First, develop a strategic plan around quality, which performs as a change agent to assist the transformation of the organisational environment into a quality culture. Second, change individual job design to group design, using wide, flexible team activity statements. Third, attract and select candidates with previous experience in a quality-oriented company, and who have the necessary aptitude to learn about the service quality system and interpersonal skills necessary to contribute to achieving quality with the team. Fourth, train top managers in service quality tools and teamwork, focusing on aspects like leadership, supervision and coaching workers in quality management. Fifth, produce communications about quality such as bulletins, announcements and videos. Sixth, design performance appraisal and reward systems that are linked to quality development and customer satisfaction. Seventh, design surveys to assess employee participation in and satisfaction with the quality system. Finally, focus on safety aspects and the physical workplace to develop the quality of the working environment. It can be concluded that the cornerstone of employing service quality is the best transformation of HR practices. Madera et al., (2017) also proposed the development of a quality culture using HR practices and adjusting the different HR practices in a way that helps to accomplish the organisational objectives.

## **Employee Selection in the Hotel Industry**

According to Jonah et al. (2019), employee resourcing aims to guarantee that the company acquires and keeps the individuals it wants and hires them effectively. The employee resourcing approach is involved in both the formulation and the implementation of organisational strategies. Baum (2016) investigated the challenges in employee supply in the hotel industry and he argued that hotels hang on to their high guest–staff ratio while simultaneously facing difficulties from a shortage of labour supply without being interested in increasing compensation. This issue could be a barrier to selection of qualified employees in the hotel industry. The selection of the best employees is a vital stage in achieving service quality in a hotel. In the service quality philosophy, customer satisfaction is one of the most important objectives (Kemboi and Onyango, 2015). Recruiting and selecting the right worker, who is customer oriented and a creative thinker and who can do the type of work required by the service quality philosophy, can assist in meeting that objective. As stated earlier, HRM is primarily about linking HR to the strategic and operational requirements of the business. Su et al. (2016) supported this idea, asserting that good service is obtained when the types of employees a company actually appoints and the types of employees that customers desire to have serving them are matched. They further examined the match between employee and organisation. They discussed how the selection method is one of the most significant parts of HRM, basically because it is not feasible to enhance the effectiveness of HR by any means if there is no satisfactory link. Without the necessary link between the employees and the organisation, it is difficult to attain a good return on any of the other investments in HR practices. They also mentioned that in the past recruitment and selection have been predominantly concerned with allocating workers to particular jobs. Today, they have become important in evaluating workers to investigate the possible range of opportunities for worker mobility into and out of the company to other locations in the same company, communication with a broad range of teammates, and the fit with the existing environment of customers, culture and technology. Singh et al. (2017) agreed with Su et al. (2016) in proposing that new processes of selection and evaluation represent the case when organisational adjustments fits and influences on employees, either assumed or actual employees, and in so doing, outlines, recognises and evaluates them in terms of structurally defined critical qualities.

### ***The Process of Employee Selection***

The earlier studies emphasise that service quality execution requires an effective recruitment and selection process that contains systematic hiring techniques and the use of successful, sophisticated selection approaches that can aid management to discover the behaviour traits and competences of the candidates. Having a systematic recruitment and selection process should begin with identifying the hotel's needs. Within the service quality philosophy, it is not just the nature of the job that determines the required employee skills, but also customers' desires, which considers the main role in identifying those competences. Establishing good job descriptions and job specifications in an efficient way will make the selection procedure easier since management are aware what they are searching for. Armstrong (1991) specified that the activity of attracting capable employees begins with examining the business's strengths and weaknesses. This evaluation should involve elements such as the company's reputation, job security, opportunities for training and development, and internal career opportunities. These elements should be compared with rivals to define the hotel's recruitment problems that need to be resolved (e.g., company's reputation, job security, etc.) and what strengths to highlight. This debate raises a vital issue, which is the available labour market. The hotel industry should be conscious of the existing standards of labour in local zones. Armstrong (1991) also stated that organisations have to create realistic job specifications that assist them to acquire the best potential candidates. It can be argued that in Canada hotel properties face problems in recruiting employees due to the fact that supply is lower than demand (Murray et al., 2017).

### ***Employee Selection Challenges and Methods***

Baum (2019) investigated the challenging issues that the hospitality industry faces with regard to recruitment and retention of employees and he found that the current talent upon which hospitality considerably depends may not be fit for purpose and that the broader workplace culture within the hospitality industry does not fit with the attraction of the very best talent into the sector. Hotels should also find different methods of attracting applicants. Methods can be internal, within the hotel itself, or external, such as advertisements, job fairs and recruitment companies. Advertising is the most-used technique for attracting applicants. Within service

quality, attracting experienced workers should involve the careful selection of advertisement channels. Ganesan et al. (2018) argued that job advertisements based on capabilities have been recognised to be effective in attracting candidates with a suitable attitude. They added that the process of self-screening could be helpful, through realistic job previews. They can provide candidates with an idea of the organisation's expectations of potential workers. Therefore, hotels must look for specific capabilities and skills in potential workers. Hotels also need to find new selection approaches by which management can find the best applicants that help in attaining the planned objectives. The selection tools have to be customised to the needs of each particular hotel (Basak and Khanna, 2017). The interview appears to be the most-used selection tool in hotels (Chytiri et al., 2018). However, Su et al. (2015) asserted that many studies have stated the limitations of the interview. Su et al. (2015) added that structured interviews are more consistent than traditional interviews, yet they are not flexible enough to let interviewees spontaneously express themselves. They recommended adding behavioural questions to the structured questions. For instance, the structured interview could comprise situational questions, which include imaginary situations that may happen at work, where applicants have to describe how they would react to the situation. On the other hand, behavioural questions emphasise historical behaviour by asking applicants what they have done in their previous jobs (e.g., describe a situation where you had to deal with difficult questions and explain what exactly you did). Although the interview is the most-utilised selection tool, there are other tools that might also be utilised, such as psychometric tests to measure individuals' mental capabilities and behavioural style, and customer service questionnaires (Taylor and Small, 2002; Hammond, 2006). It could be claimed that these systematic selection techniques cost more than traditional ones, and they also require experienced and skilled personnel to successfully apply them. Some hotel managers believe that they do not have to spend a huge amount of money exercising sophisticated selection practices when there is comparatively high employee turnover in the hotels (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2004). Baum and Nickson (1998) discussed some concerns in the hospitality industry, which can be applied in this context to illuminate the previous discussion. One of the issues they discussed is the fact that quality service needs skilled employees, whereas training is a costly investment in workers. They further mentioned that the skills that are improved by training could make employees attractive to rivals and might encourage employees to switch to competitors. In addition, they argued that the hospitality industry is facing high labour turnover.

If workers are going to resign anyway, it is not beneficial to invest hugely in their training. This debate leads to the query: what is the relative prominence of quality to a hotel? Hotels must visibly define their objectives and evaluate the possibility of applying the service quality culture. Selecting workers using one or more of the selection tools discussed earlier is not an easy practice; HRM managers should apply this process cautiously. For example, Levashina et al. (2014) mentioned that a one-to-one interview is the most effective approach or, at most, two-to-one. One person must make the final selection. They claim that having more than two interviewers at the same time is less effective. The applicant becomes puzzled, it is hard to get an ordinary flow of questions and, because each interviewer believes he/she must ask questions, the applicant is not given adequate opportunity to express himself/herself. On the other hand, Naim et al. (2016) disagreed with this and argued that within the quality management philosophy there must be a team of interviewers to select the best applicant for the position. This practice has many advantages that benefit the interviewers, the applicant, and the business as a whole. It can be said that the latter selection practice is more suitable because the attendance of a team of interviewers can result in different thoughts, which ultimately leads to the selection of the most qualified candidate to fill the vacancy. This study will investigate the area of recruitment and selection and explore how recruitment and selection practices could lead to hiring the best candidates who can provide the required level of service quality.

Thus, in the light of service quality goals and methods, from a theoretical viewpoint, workers in hotels need to be quality oriented, highly able in guest communication, flexible and customer oriented (Dalkir, 2013). Employees in hotels must also have the ability to solve problems, deal with stress, work with teams and manage conflicts. They have to be enthusiastic and emotionally stable, and have leadership skills, technical skills and work experience. It may not be essential for all these qualities to be possessed by all of the workers in the hotel, as some positions do not require all of them. Nevertheless, these qualities and characteristics could be the basis for selecting employees in hotels (Basak and Khanna, 2017).

### **Training and Development in the Hotel Industry**

The environment of the hotel business depends hugely on the face-to-face delivery of service to customers by workers. As Lu et al. (2015) stated, these communications take place several times

each day during the customers' stay, and are intentionally or unintentionally assessed by customers against their expectations. Therefore, it becomes crucial that each worker in a hotel is completely equipped to provide excellent service to the guests (Lin et al., 2017). One technique for attaining this aim is through training and development. According to Dhar (2015), training is conducted to achieve a range of outcomes from educating, inspiring and rewarding to improving performance. Dhar added that to recognise the role of training, it is crucial to consider the training function in a logical manner. The training role is a processing system, transforming training requirement data, training expertise, training technology and untrained workers into an output of trained workers for diverse operational tasks. The role of training in enhancing labour standards becomes more vital when service quality is introduced to a hotel. Although training is crucial when pursuing service quality, training can cost a large amount of money and time. Redman and Mathews (1998) exposed how service sectors lagged behind other industries in their commitment to offering training to support quality management. Redman and Mathews added that even when training is employed, it is limited to middle-manager level, while lower-level workers are often ignored. Mathews et al. (2001) added that the nature of training has also been criticised. Training in Europe has been seen to tend to focus on tools and techniques, while in North America training focuses more on soft skills such as teamwork, communication skills and problem-solving. In this study, training practice will be examined in depth to confirm how Canadian five-star hotels provide their training and how the training could affect the quality of service.

Based on the fact that training is costly if it is conducted professionally, it can be suggested that some hotels might not implement a lot of training in order to reduce costs and increase their profits. If this is the case, this could influence their competitive advantage in the long term, as their level of service would be below that of rivals that pay more attention to training. Hotels must be aware that training will have a return on investment due to increasing performance levels and service quality. Training is important to the successful achievement of service quality and it has become more vital due to the rapid changes in the industry. The role of training in implementing service quality in the hotel industry is substantial and requires training specialists who are skilled at clarifying the service quality vision, spreading the concepts, helping to overcome problems, observing progress and taking corrective actions if required. Thus, training

should not be limited to the training manager. It will also need the involvement of training experts and higher managers within the hotel. Park et al. (2015) suggested that the existence of training experts is essential in the implementation of quality management. Qualified consultants are typically involved in order to help solve problems or apply changes, and provide advice and suggestions.

The first and most imperative phase in planning training programmes that support service quality and emphasise a quality culture is defining the training goals. Silberman and Biech (2015) claimed that training goals need to be specified and evidenced in writing by organisations so that the training approach is communicated and interconnected with work outcomes. If training goals are not clear, training has a less positive influence. Training approaches that add effectiveness to employees' current and future capability to participate in the hotel's enhancement have three mechanisms: the planning process of training; the execution of the training plan; and the appraisal of the training results. The planning process begins with the defining of training needs. This step is critical and should be treated appropriately as it influences the trainees, the hotel, the components of the training schedules, and the quality of the training activities. Identifying training needs commences with running training needs analysis (Cohen, 2017). These should be examined first for the entire business, second for the departments, and third for employee needs. The techniques used in training needs analysis are as follows: first, evaluation of an HR plan that defines the kinds of skills that may be essential in the future and the number of employees for whom those skills will be required; second, job analysis to inspect in depth the job content, the performance standards associated with quality of the results, and the experiences and skills required to complete the job; third, performance reviews analysis; and fourth, a training questionnaire that includes collection of data by examining superiors to form their visions of training needs. Cohen (2017) also stated that it could be debated that other main sources in defining training needs are customers' opinions and workers' opinions. As mentioned earlier, the service quality emphasis is on consumer satisfaction; hence, considering their judgements and complaints will give a signal of what types of training are essential for workers. Employees' point of view is another main source of information. Jaiswal and Chandra (2013) also stated that employees commonly aware more regard their work issues than managers because they are the ones who experience the problems. Consequently, hotels must not neglect this fundamental



source. For this reason, the current study will take employees' opinions into consideration and collect in-depth data about how HR practices influence service quality in the Canadian hotel industry. Most previous studies have neglected low-level employees' point of view regarding HR and service quality and have, rather, focused on the customer point of view. This prompted the researcher to investigate more in this area and this will add value to the academic reviews and to practice.

Once training goals and needs are set, the next step is to define the contents of training programmes. The contents of programmes might differ from one hotel to another based on employee knowledge, experience and behaviour. Each of these elements – knowledge, experience and behaviour – needs a different style and different training techniques. For instance, improving knowledge that supports service quality could be achieved by focusing on areas such as communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork and knowledge-sharing skills, and other issues that impact on employee productivity. These concerns could be tackled through case studies, discussions, visual aids and lectures. These tools would help in detecting as visibly as possible the hotel vision of the service quality and communicating to personnel what the hotel is striving to accomplish. On-the-job training has an essential role in conveying quality values and confirms the success of the new organisational philosophy (Lin et al., 2017). It also improves the experience of employees; however, the issue with this type of training is that junior workers are accompanying qualified workers who are not trained to train others (Asfaw et al., 2015). To overcome this issue of training the trainer, those who are chosen to train junior workers need to be provided with proper training programmes on how to train such new workers. Employee behaviour is the most challenging aspect to alter and it requires understanding of the attitudes of those who are running the training as well as the cultural forms of behaviour within the hotel (Maull et al., 2001). Consequently, the hotel should cautiously select a training method that fits the nature of the work within the functions of the hotel. The final element of the training process is to assess the results of the training programmes that have been conducted. This process is critical because it demonstrates whether the training was valuable or not, and whether it has improved productivity and the quality of job performance or not. Armstrong and Taylor (2014) agreed that training assessment needs to be implemented on four levels: first, trainees' reaction to the programme; second, what the trainees have gained from the programme; third, whether

trainees' behaviour has altered based on what was taught; and fourth, whether the modification in behaviour has positively influenced the organisation's performance. The last level of assessment is the most critical and must be based on pre- and post-training measures.

## **Rewards and Incentives**

According to Armstrong (2010), reward management is about how employees are compensated in accordance with their importance to a business. It involves both monetary and non-monetary rewards, which form the total reward system (Güngör, 2011). The monetary rewards include both variable and fixed remuneration and employee benefits, while non-monetary rewards include recognition, honour, success and personal growth. Lucas (1995) argued that the hotel and tourism industry offers a poorer level of benefits compared to other industries. Baum (1995) expanded on this, providing several contributing issues. These are the large number of small hotels, variations in the level of hotel activity, cost pressures caused by rivalry, and vulnerability of workers, due to contractual status. It can be argued that these factors can be found in Canadian hotels. It can also be argued that low-level workers in Canadian hotels receive poor remuneration compared to other industries. Debating the reward system from a service quality perspective involves concentrating not so much on how a reward system could be settled as on the significance of this concern in sustaining the service quality. Rewards and recognition are central notions in service quality. They have an essential role in motivating workers on quality. Rewards show workers that their efforts to achieve quality, their proficiencies and their judgement are important. Riemer et al. (2018) discussed the consequence of rewards in the effective employment of quality management by focusing on the schemes of these HR practices. Additionally, recognition has the same significant role in increasing employee satisfaction.

Recognition could range from a simple verbal message to modest awards. Ashraf and Bandiera (2018) added that some examples of recognition could be acknowledgement of efforts made by employees in a meeting, or provision of certificates, or vouchers or trips to tourist destinations. However, Coccia (2019) stated that workers with a high financial orientation to work will prefer incentives, which can increase their interest. At the same time, the extreme use of incentives could reduce the sense of internal satisfaction. Consequently, it is essential to deliver a proper

level of incentives while allowing workers to enjoy the personal satisfaction that comes from conducting an appropriately challenging task well. Gogia and Soni (2017) recommended some tips for an effective reward system in hotels. They suggested that management should design the reward system in terms of aims, practices and potential incidents. The hotel must also communicate the details of the reward system for all workers to be aware, in order to evade concerns of unfair treatment. Furthermore, information should be kept and made available for reference about the delivery of specific types of incentives among workers. A successful reward system requires that an employee's performance be sensibly compared to that of other employees doing similar tasks as a basis for determining levels of rewards. Finally, leaders should be trained in the skills of incentive evaluation as part of service quality management training programmes, and information on the reward system should be continuously clarified to new workers during their orientation in hotels.

In conclusion, to fill this gap in the earlier literature, which highly recommended further investigation of HR practices and evaluation of their level of impact on service quality by integrating the qualitative approach in evaluating the relationship between HR practices and service quality, this study proposes a conceptual framework (see section 2.9) to better highlight the relationship between HR practices and service quality in hotels.

## **2.9 Hotel Industry in Canada**

There were approximately 8,178 hotel properties in Canada by 2016 (Willie et al., 2017). These hotel properties together provide approximately 447,586 rooms and about 304,000 jobs. In 2015, the Canadian hotel industry reported around \$18.4 billion dollars in National Accommodation Revenue along with an additional \$17 billion dollars from value-added services and an additional \$8.1 billion dollars for all three levels of government (municipal, provincial and federal) including \$3.6 billion to the federal government (Prud'homme and Raymond, 2016). These figures imply that the Canadian hotel industry is financially a very positive and significant revenue generator for the economy of Canada. In 2015, the top hotel service providers in Canada by revenue were: Four Seasons, Toronto, Ontario; Fairmont Raffles, Toronto, Ontario; Marriott,

Mississauga, Ontario; Wyndham Hotel Group; Parsippany, NJ; Choice Hotels Canada Inc., Mississauga, Ontario; and Best Western International (Hotel Association of Canada, 2016).

Despite the fact that the hospitality industry is facing many changes across the globe at a much faster rate than it ever has before, the expectations of guests, employees, stakeholders and organisations associated with the hospitality industry are increasing at a rapid pace. In order to meet these expectations, the hospitality industry is striving to keep up with new management styles, and innovations in technology and operational processes (Jayawardena, 2013). However, the Canadian hotel industry has not been able to get away from the reality of the speed at which things are changing and evolving. In other words, the Canadian hotel industry is struggling to keep up with these changes so as to better meet expectations and demands from various stakeholders (Salvioni, 2016). This constant change in the hotel industry in Canada is manifesting itself in the redesigning and redefining of the hotel sector (Jayawardena et al., 2013).

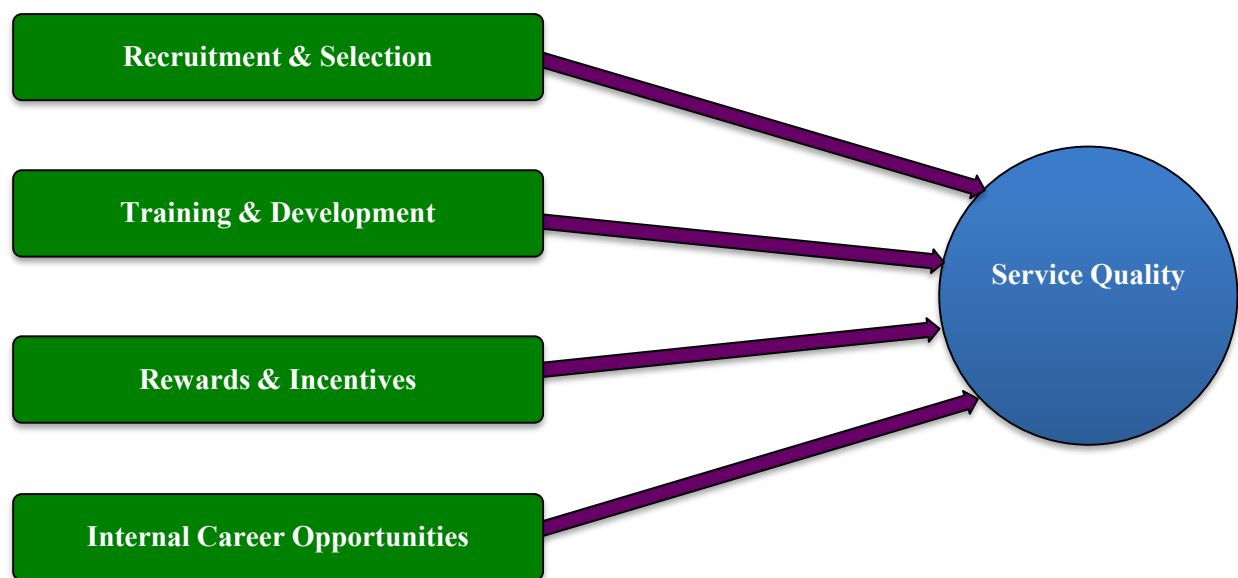
According to Liu (2016), Canadian hotel companies have been extremely successful in combining quality initiatives with the culture of organisations and employee relation strategies. This is proven to have been especially successful for some hotels such as Delta. Consequently, maintaining quality of products with suitable quality of human resources is considered among the major challenges for the Canadian hotel industry. Many hotel companies face challenges related to recruitment and retention of high-quality employees in junior and entry-level or lower-level management positions during the seasonality (Jayawardena, 2013).

In term of hotels occupancy, Canadian hotels have recorded a fairly stable occupancy level from 2015 to 2017, varying between 63% and 65%. Occupancy increased by two points in 2018 to end the year at 66%. Meanwhile, Average Daily Rates (ADR) have increased considerably between 2013 and 2018, growing by a compound annual growth rate of 3.7% over the last five years. The mixture of the aforementioned two key performance indicators has resulted in a revenue per available room (RevPAR) of \$103 for year ending in 2018. The compound annual growth rate for RevPAR is estimated at 5.1% over the past five years. The strong results of 2018 are in part the result of several factors such as the celebrations surrounding the 150th anniversary of the confederation, along with Montréal's 375th birthday and the 50th anniversary of Expo 67. In turn, the increases in tourism and tourist arrivals have allowed for increased tourism spending, ultimately adding an estimated 19,000 jobs within Canada (Ministry of Tourism, 2019).

## 2.10 The Research's Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework argues that using proper HRM practices would achieve value for organisations in terms of service quality (figure 9). The researcher argues that hotel staff behaviour in delivering high service quality results from using sound HRM practices and will consequently ensure customer satisfaction.

Figure 9: Research conceptual framework.



Source: Adopted from Chand (2010); Chang et al. (2011); Davidson and Wang (2011); He et al. (2011).

This research has adopted the primary research question:

What is the impact of HR practices on service quality in Canadian hotels?

Based on the existing literature on HR practices, and the main conceptual models of HRM and service quality (e.g., Wright and McMahan, 1992; Becker and Huselid, 1998; Purcell and Kinnie 2007; Chand, 2010; Chang et al., 2011; Davidson and Wang, 2011; He et al., 2011), the proposed model (see figure 9) provides an integrated framework that can shed light on which system of HR practices impacts on service quality.

Given the main aim of the study, which focuses on the relationship between HR practices and service quality, this model provides a framework for understanding the potential performance implications of HR practices and how they affect the level of service quality. In addition, understanding the perceived role of a bundle of HRM practices in these relationships is critical as the system of HRM practices is the primary way to influence the level of service quality.

The above model proposes that the perceived system of HRM practices positively influences the level of employees' performance, which in turn positively affects the level of service quality.

The basic justification behind this research's conceptual framework is that satisfied hotel customers are not suddenly produced by HRM practices without the contribution of service quality. It has been argued that in a hotel, quality improvement must be dependent on good recruitment and selection, training, rewards and internal career opportunities (Purcell et al., 2007).

Previous HRM literature indicated that employees should receive sufficient HR practices to deliver high service quality. Consequently, figure 9 was created based on the research questions and the literature review in order to achieve the aim of the research.

Recent work (e.g., Altarwneh et al., 2019; Hewagama et al., 2019) suggested that recruitment and selection play an important role in employees' performance. In this study, the researcher will explore the relationship between recruitment systems and the performance of employees and an investigation will take place to explore whether this affects the service quality level. Some researchers have argued that the hotel industry is encountering a shortage in the workforce. For example, Baum (2016) found that there is a shortage of labour, and hotels are still not willing to increase pay in order to attract more potential workers to the industry. Also, Murray et al. (2017) investigated the challenges that face the hotel industry in Canada and they concluded that the sector in Canada is facing a shortage of hotel experts. Hospitality service work is extensively described as low-skilled in both the academic literature and other publications, which is a reflection of aspects of work in the industry. These mostly focus on low levels of qualifications, low pay, extreme dependence on seasonal work, high employee turnover and related concerns, which are valid in the context of developed countries. (Baum, 1996; Westwood, 2002). In addition, some researchers claim that using a systematic selection technique could be very expensive and time-consuming (Lockyer and Scholarios, 2004). By conducting this study, the

researcher will be able to evaluate the recruitment and selection practices in Canadian hotels and analyse their impact on service quality.

Other researchers (e.g., He et al., 2011; Elkhwesky et al., 2019) have supported the statement that training and development enhance the performance of workers and lead to enhance customer satisfaction. Many other researchers have discussed the impact of an orientation period on the new worker's readiness and impression of the organisation. Workers are provided with essential knowledge and skills to function within the systems and set standards of a company by means of training (Elkhwesky et al., 2019). Training and development are a key tool in the formulation of HRM practices (Nickson, 2007). Therefore, successful hotels continuously include staff training as their critical development strategy. However, Baum and Nickson (1998) raised some concerns related to training in the hospitality industry and they stated that training could be expensive and, once the employees' skills have improved, they will be attractive to competitors. This might lead to increased employee turnover as some employees will switch to other hotels. For this reason, the researcher in this study decided to include training as a construct in the conceptual model and explore how eventually this will be related to service quality in the Canadian hotel industry.

In term of rewards and incentives, Sandilyan et al. (2011) found that there was dissatisfaction with regard to the rewards and compensation among low-level employees in the hotels of West Bengal. They also recommended hotels plan for career growth as well as training of workers. Baum (2016) also agreed with this and stated that the hotel industry provides lower pay compared to other industries. In the hotel industry, numerous HR practices adopted with regard to rewards, recognition and communication must be in line with the core HR strategy of retaining the best employees (Anh and Kleiner, 2005; Browning et al., 2009; Kuslivan et al., 2010).

Rewards and incentives have a positive relationship with performance. Additionally, recognition has a positive influence on employee satisfaction. Recognition could be a positive verbal message or appreciation of employees' efforts (Ashraf and Bandiera, 2018; Riemer et al., 2018). Also, Coccia (2019) stated that individuals with a financial orientation will like incentives, and this could in turn positively affect their performance. Gogia and Soni (2017) emphasised planning the rewards and incentives system to match the organisational objectives. This debate forced the researcher to explore further in this area and analyse the situation of rewards and incentives in Canadian hotels and how they influence the level of service quality.

The fourth construct in the conceptual model is that of internal career opportunities. Internal career opportunities occur when employees are hired internally, rather than external candidates being considered. This helps workers to develop their skills and knowledge (Newell, 2005). Some previous studies have argued that internal career opportunities lead to the development of workers within their companies as opportunities for promotion in the company (Compton, 2009; Shammot, 2014). Mustapha et al. (2013) argued that when employees know that they have opportunities in the organisation, this helps them to perform better (Hu, 2016). Furthermore, the employment of internal career opportunities could also encourage justice within companies and avoid the possibility of the discomfort that might happen when outsiders fill positions (Hu, 2016). Holtbrügge et al. (2010) explored a positive relation between internal career opportunities and organisational performance. In addition, internal career opportunities are negatively linked with employee turnover (Tooksoon, 2011). Internal career opportunities are a controversial issue as some studies argue that there could be disadvantages of recruiting internally. Some of these disadvantages can be that employees who applied for the position and were not selected might feel that the management is simply not recognising their hard work. Also, Muscalu (2015) indicated that recruiting internally might limit choices and not allow better applicants to be selected from outside the organisation. Muscalu (2015) further mentioned that recruitment within the company could be particularly effective if the company has previously conducted recruitment of qualified employees with high potential. This debate guided the researcher in this study to explore further the role of internal career opportunities in the level of service quality provided.

## **2.11 Summary**

This chapter has presented a critical review of the literature in the fields that were found to be of relevance to the general research area. There is a need to present the intended HRM practices of recruitment, selection, training, development, rewards and incentives, and internal career opportunities.

However, it was discovered that much uncertainty exists surrounding the concept of service quality in the hotel context – its evaluation methods and debates and the relationship between service quality and HRM practices. In particular, this literature was found to reveal the



importance of considering qualitative measures to better investigate the relationship between service quality and HRM practices in hotels.

The final section of the review explored the impact of HRM practices on service quality by presenting the suggested conceptual model, with its two stages: first, consequences; second, outcomes. Based on the review of the literature, research gaps in current knowledge have been identified and the research question has been highlighted.

There is no consensus on the concept of service quality and its evaluation methods that can be found in either the literature or in the empirical evidence currently available. These complexities might have supported the views as every scholar defines the concept according to his/her own thoughts.

The following chapter goes on to describe the research design through which the research question and objectives will be answered.

### **3 Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Chapter Two provided a critical review of literature related to the relationship between HRM practices and service quality in the hotel industry. This chapter discusses the research approach used to achieve the research objectives by presenting both the philosophical approach adopted and the methods employed. This research is predominantly qualitative in nature and uses interview tool to analyse the relationship between HRM practices and service quality in the Canadian hotel sector.

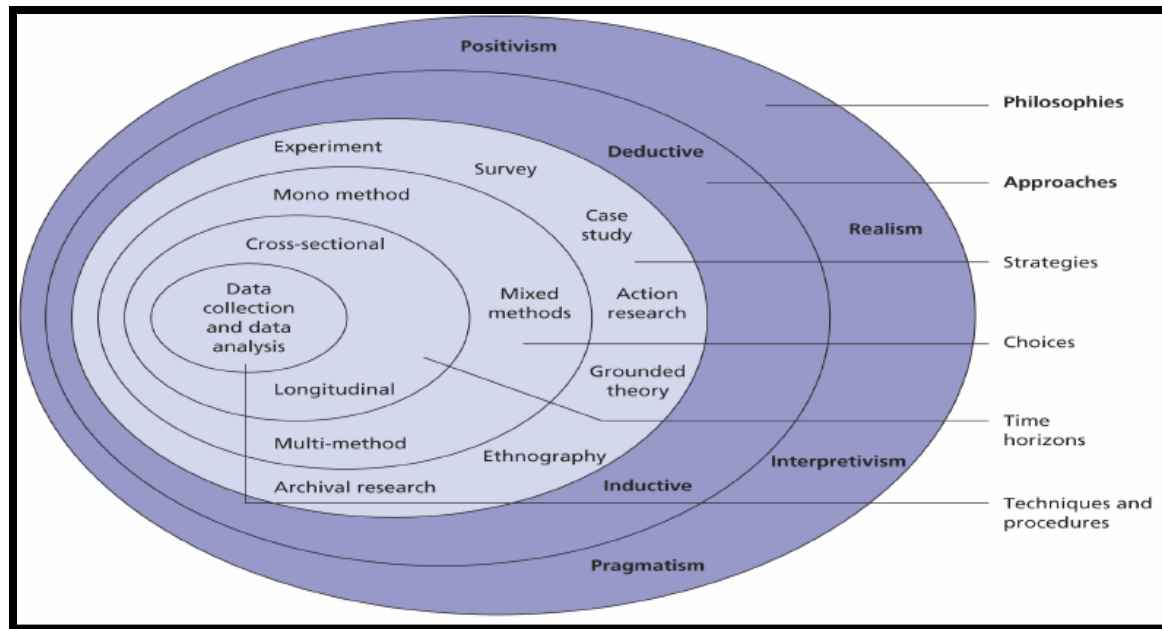
#### **3.2 Overview of the Research Design**

Research design should be based on philosophy. Based on the philosophy of the research, methodologies are selected and developed. Finally, research methodology will act as a guide in selecting the research methods for collecting data to fulfil the research objectives.

According to Walsh et al. (2015) the research design sets the researcher in the empirical world and links the research question to the collected data. For this study, sub-section (3.3) deals with the research philosophy, while section (3.4) covers the adopted research approach. In (3.5) section, the adopted research strategy (qualitative) is discussed, followed by section (3.6) in which the pilot study is discussed. Section (3.7) covers the time horizon of the current study. In the last sub-section (3.8), the current study's data collection methods are explained through three sources in sub-sections (3.8.1-3.8.3).

Research design criteria are discussed in the light of Saunders et al.'s (2009) research 'onion' (Figure 10), in order to develop a methodology which achieves the purposes of the current study. Figure10 gives specific answers to a sequence of questions regarding the research philosophy adopted, research approach, research strategy, time horizon, and data collection method.

Figure 10: Research process



Source: Saunders et al. (2009).

### 3.3 Research Philosophy: Interpretivism

Understanding the research philosophy is useful in deciding which research design is going to work and why (Yin, 2014). The literature identifies a few different philosophies or paradigms for conducting studies in business and management science. As a result, different names and classifications developed, such as positivism, phenomenology, pragmatism, interpretivism, realism, etc. (Saunders et al., 2009; Strawn, 2012). Notably, Saunders et al. (2009) presented a comparison of most of the philosophies in management research which are positivism, interpretivism, realism and pragmatism (Table 3).

Hence, the literature provides sufficient discussion regarding these different philosophies in order to outline elements and differences between them in terms of ontology (the reality which is being investigated), epistemology (relationship between reality and researcher) and methodology (techniques which will be used by the researcher) (Yin, 2014).

Positivism assumes that the researcher makes an objective analysis and interpretation of the data collected (Saunders et al., 2009). In other words, a positivism research philosophy supposes that

researchers deal with issues objectively without influencing the real problem being studied. Furthermore, this philosophy supposes that the final product gained by this method can be law-like generalisations, similar to the results obtained by physical and natural scientists. In addition, this philosophy requires a highly-structured methodology, quantifiable observations and statistical analysis (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Thus, researchers in such a paradigm separate themselves from the world they investigate. Consequently, the researcher decided to implement the interpretivism paradigm as it is more suitable to study the research problem.

Table 3: Comparison of research philosophies in management research

Feature	Positivism	Realism	Interpretivism	Pragmatism
<b>Ontology:</b>  The researcher's view of the nature of reality or being	External, objective and independent of social actors	Is objective. Exists independently of human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence (realist), but is interpreted through social conditioning (critical realist)	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple	External, multiple, view chosen to best enable answering of research question
<b>Epistemology:</b>  The researcher's view regarding what constitutes Acceptable knowledge	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. Focus on causality and law like generalisations, reducing	Observable phenomena provide credible data, facts. Insufficient data means inaccuracies in sensations (direct realism).	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of situation, a reality behind these details,	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge dependent upon the research

	phenomena to simplest elements	Alternatively, phenomena create sensations which are open to misinterpretation (Critical realism). Focus on explaining within a context or contexts	subjective meanings motivating actions	question. Focus on practical applied research, integrating different perspectives to help interpret the data
<b>Axiology:</b>  The researcher's view of the role of values in research	Research is undertaken in a value-free way, the researcher is independent of the data and maintains an objective stance	Research is value laden; the researcher is biased by world views, cultural experiences and upbringing. These will impact on the research	Research is value bound, the researcher is part of what is being researched, cannot be separated and so will be subjective	Values play a large role in interpreting results, the researcher adopting both objective and subjective points of view
<b>Data collection techniques most often used</b>	Highly structured, large samples, measurement, quantitative, but can use qualitative	Methods chosen must fit the subject matter, quantitative or qualitative	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative	Mixed or multiple method designs, quantitative and qualitative

Source:(Saunders et al., 2009, p. 119).

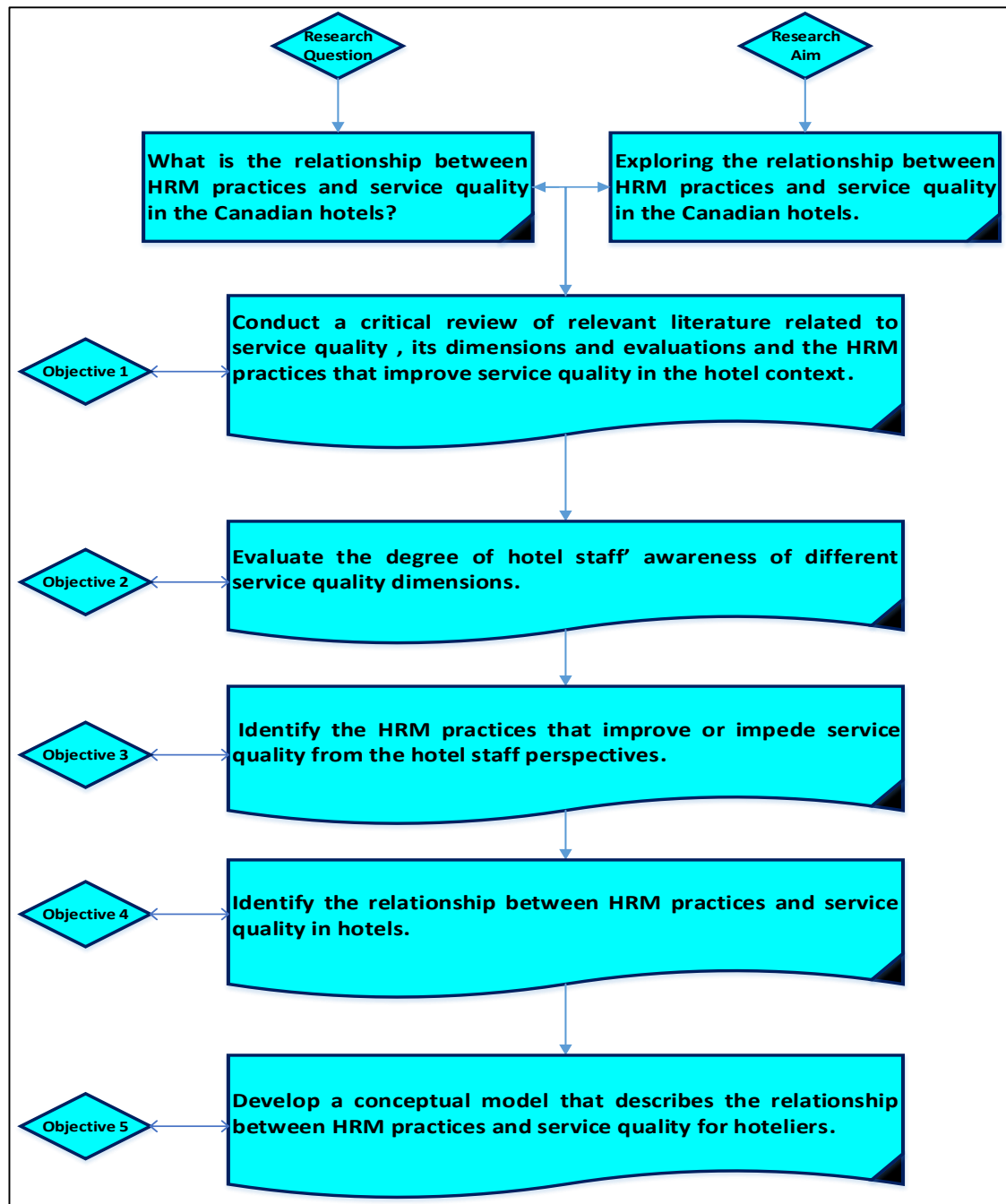
In contrast to the positivism philosophy, phenomenology or interpretivism have a different view for developing knowledge, focusing on a subjective and descriptive model to deal with

complicated situations rather than an objective, tangible or mathematical model (Remenyi, 2005). Such philosophies argue that the social world of business and management science is too complex to be treated as a physical science. To put it another way, any rich explanation and insight for complex management studies in the social world will be lost if its complexity is reduced to a series of law-like generalizations. In addition, this school considers each business situation unique, with different and particular circumstances. Besides the complexity and uniqueness of the world, this school of thought considers and takes account of the changing state of business organisations as well as different interpretations by different people. Therefore, this methodology is not a suitable method for generalisation (Corbin et al., 2014).

Realism according to Saunders et al. (2009) is another philosophical position which relies on scientific enquiry. The fundamental nature of realism is that which the senses show us as reality - what is the truth - since objects are independent of human conceptualisation. Realism is a branch of epistemology that is similar to positivism in that it assumes a scientific approach to the development of knowledge. This assumption underpins the collection of data and the understanding of those data. Pragmatism is a philosophy that removes the need to force a choice between positivism and interpretivism with regard to epistemology and ontology. Pragmatists reject traditional assumptions about the nature of knowledge, truth and the notion that the real world can be accessed solely by means of one scientific method (Creswell, 2008).

Given the above discussion, the current study adopted the philosophy of interpretivism as its epistemological perspective; since it involves mainly qualitative data collected at different stages of the research to answer the research question and to achieve its aim and objectives (See Figure 11). Therefore, interpretivism is an appropriate epistemological stance designed to give practical significance to this research.

Figure 11: Research question, aim and objectives



### 3.4 The Research Approach

According to Corbin et al. (2014) the research approach is concerned with how the research project will engage the use of theory. Finn et al. (2000) concluded that research needs theory as a framework for interpretation, while theory needs research to constantly review, modify, and challenge theoretical details. In this respect, researchers choose the best fit of different research approaches to their research aims. Generally, there are two research approaches; a deductive approach (testing theory) and an inductive approach (building theory) (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2006; Saunders et al., 2009). Each contains basic elements as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Major differences between deductive and inductive approaches to research

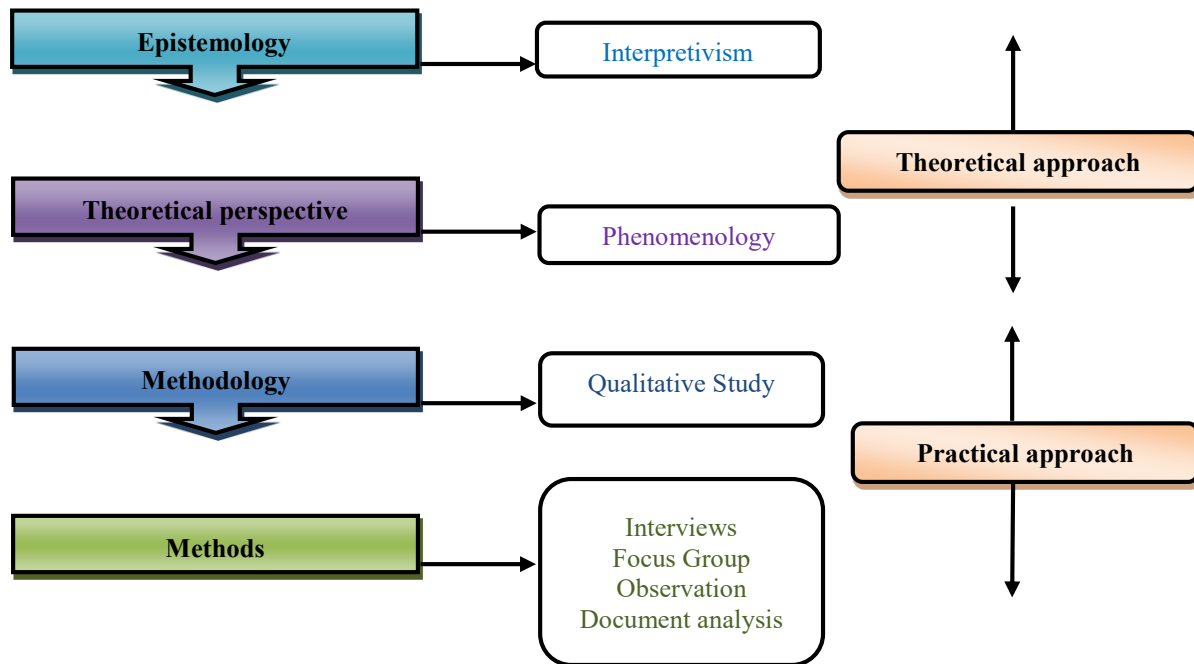
Deduction emphasises	Induction emphasises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• scientific principles</li><li>• moving from theory to data</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the need to explain causal relationships between variables</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a close understanding of the research context</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the collection of quantitative data</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the collection of qualitative data</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a highly structured approach</li><li>• the application of controls to ensure validity of data</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• researcher independence of what is being researched</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a realisation that the researcher is part of the research process</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the operationalization of concepts to ensure clarity of definition</li><li>• the necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• less concern with the need to generalise</li></ul>

Source: Saunders et al., (2009).

Crotty (1998) proposed four key themes that should be justified and identified in order to develop a research approach: methods, methodology, theoretical perspective, and epistemology as shown in Figure 12. Crotty (2003) further modified the abovementioned four elements of research approach into two divisions: the theoretical approach that involves the epistemology and theoretical perspective and the practical approach that includes the methodology and methods.



Figure 12: Research approach utilised in this study



Sources: adapted from Crotty, (1998).

### 3.5 Qualitative Research Approach

Research strategy is a general plan of how the research question(s) will be answered (Corbin et al., 2014). Although there are several strategies that can be employed in research, there is no research strategy that can be considered as being superior to others. The most important questions are whether a particular strategy fits with the assumptions of the chosen research philosophy or not, and whether it enables the researcher to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives or not (Saunders et al., 2009). However, Creswell and Poth (2017) asserted that what matters is not the label that is attached to a particular strategy, but whether it is appropriate for the research question(s) and objectives.

Qualitative research methods emphasis on exploring and understanding the experiences, perceptions, and opinions of participants—that is, qualitative research discovers meaning, reality, or purpose. At this stage, qualitative research engages an interpretive, naturalistic contact to the

world. This means that qualitative investigators look at things in their natural sets, trying to make sense of, or decode, experiences in terms of the meanings individuals bring to them (John Creswell, 2008).

Face-to-face interview is one method to explore information about a sample of participants' own experience of the topic of the study (Englander 2012). Phellas et al. (2011) spotted that there is no set technique to confirm a perfect interview, but suggested that there would be just one criterion that describes a good interview in phenomenological terms: that as the interviewer must attempt to draw description of the interviewee's point view of the topic of study that is as complete as it conceivably can be.

Table 5: Details of hotels used in research

Hotel	Interview Respondents Codes	NOP (N=34)
Hotel.1	HR1+FOS1+ R1+W1+H1+ E1	6
Hotel.2	HR2+FOS2+ R2+W2+H2 E2	6
Hotel.3	HR3+HS1+ R3+W3+H3+E3	6
Hotel.4	HR4+HS2+ R4+W4+H4+C1	6
Hotel.5	HR5+HW1+ R4+W5+H5	5
Hotel.6	HR6+HC1+ R6+W6+C2	5

Note: NOP: Number of Participants.

The coding schemes for the interviewees are illustrated in Table 5. The coding scheme is based on the position or job title of different sets of employees. For instance, HR managers are coded from HR1 to HR6 to differentiate from supervisors and non-manager employees. Further, due to relatively large sample size of both supervisors and non-manager employees, the researcher coded them as per their specific job title. For instance, front-office supervisors from supervisors/middle managers group are coded as FOS while housekeeping supervisors are coded as HS to differentiate their responses to particular findings. The similar pattern is used for non-

manager employees to differentiate them. The next section provides the description of final sample briefing. The name of hotels was not provided in this thesis for privacy reasons.

Considering the research question, which is - “what is the relationship between HRM practices and service quality in hotels?” the qualitative study represents a proper methodology approach to answer the what, how, or why research questions (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the current research applies the qualitative approach as a methodological strategy to answer the research question and achieve its aim and objectives. In addition, qualitative strategy enables researchers to use multiple sources of evidence to answer their research questions, which in turn fosters the validation of data through triangulation and thus enhances the outcomes of the research (Basini et al., 2017).

### **3.6 Pilot Study**

The main goal of a pilot study is to develop and amend the roles and processes of the planned study. It is an exploratory study on a small scale that uses sampling but without the difficult standards of the final research, which it will be utilised to assist in refining the survey (Abu Hassan et al. 2006). According to Saunders et al., (2009) the reasons of the pilot study may be to examine survey wording, examine question sequencing, examine survey layout, achieve familiarity with participants, examine fieldwork arrangements, and predict response rate and survey completion time.

As Gardner et al. (2003) address, a pilot study is seen as an instrument to generate enriched understanding concerning the planned research. A pilot study can be known as a shakedown cruise of a new ship. In a shakedown cruise, the ship is put to sea for a short cruise to find out if all the systems work. No sailor would consider a long trip on a new ship without first checking whether the ship is seaworthy. Similarly, many research projects benefit from a pilot study to determine their seaworthiness. Therefore, the chief goal of a pilot study is not to collect research data, but to assess and check out study procedures, so that any revisions and changes can be completed before the real data is collected. Additionally, another aim of a pilot study is to recognise if the prearranged analyses work, so that any troubles or errors acknowledged through the pilot study can be changes by altering the data collection procedure (Gardner et al. 2003).

On the other hand, a pilot study is not successful in expecting the effect size regarding either the effectiveness of an involvement or the strength of connection in an observational study. The cause for this is that a pilot study is too limited to generate a dependable and reliable prediction of the effect, which means that the confidence interval around the observed effect size will be very large, and all values lying within the confidence interval may be potential values of the actual effect size (Abu Hassan et al. 2006).

In this study, the following table shows the technique that was implemented to run the pilot study:

Number of Actual Sample	34
Sample for Pilot Study	About 12% (4 interviews)
Positions of Employee in the Pilot study	1 Receptionist 1 Waiter 1 Housekeeping Supervisor 1 HR Manager
Original Question/statement	Q13 - In your experience, how would you describe HR practices as a bundle? Do you deal with them as one set that completing each other? Or do you deal with each one separately? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality? Explain in details and provide professional answer.  - Also, the word “Company” was used in many questions.
Amended Questions	Q13- In your experience, how would you describe HR practices (selection and recruitment, training and development, rewards and incentives, and internal career opportunity) as a bundle? Do you deal with them as one set that completing each other? Or do you deal with each one separately? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality? Explain in details and provide professional answer  - The word “company” was replaced with “hotel” as suggested during the pilot study.

Afterward, the data collection techniques and timing of the study were decided. On accomplishment of the pilot study, the outcomes and comments were assessed and used to update the design of the main study.

### **3.7 Time Horizons**

There are two types of time horizon for doing any study; the snapshot (cross-sectional) and the diary (longitudinal) (Saunders et al., 2009). The cross-sectional design aims to gain information at a single point of time, while longitudinal study is a strategy which involves the study of a variable subject or group of subjects over a long period of time (Collis and Hussey, 2009).

In light of the above, the current study data was collected using a cross-sectional design in the hotel industry context for the following reasons; first, the research does not consider changes or development in the relationship between the study variables, rather, it searches the relationship at a given point-in time; second, time constraint is another reason for choosing cross sectional design, as the researcher has limited time to collect data (Corbin et al., 2014).

### **3.8 Data Collection Methods**

The major final component in the research design is to find specific techniques of data collection and analysis. There are two basic sources of data: secondary data and primary data. Secondary data is data that already exists such as books, documents and articles (Collis and Hussey, 2009). Primary data is data collected specifically for the research project being undertaken by the researcher (Saunders et al., 2009).

The researcher uses the two methods of data collection. Secondary methods, through searching in several database sources were used to conceptualise the current study terms (HRM practices and service quality) and to investigate previously conducted studies that empirically investigated the relationship between the current study's themes.

This study started with the qualitative research in order to attain extended understanding of the topic to be defined in greater depth. Furthermore, for the empirical data collection process, a series of interviews took place with the HR managers, supervisors and line staff. Out of 15 hotels, there were only 6 hotels which agreed to participate. The five-star hotels were selected, as

they are the most famous hotels in Canada and they are expected to have high standards. Also, the five stars hotels have higher number of workers which will allow the researcher to interview the required number of staff and gather the data which will help to achieve the aim of this study. The investigation with supervisors in the hotels came later due to the gap between HR managers and Lower level workers identified in the responses of HR managers and non-manager staff regarding HR practices and service quality concept. The interviews with middle managers were conducted to validate whether their responses are close with HR managers or non-manager employees. The use of interviews facilitates gathering relative demographic information and allows the interviewees to share their views and insights in their own words (Bevan, 2014; Yin, 2014).

For this study, there were three sets of interviews (see appendix 1-3) in order to get the perspective on relationship between HR practices and service quality from top to bottom within hotel organisations in Canada. They were semi-structured and face-to-face and comprised of three sets of interviewees (6 HR Managers; 6 supervisors; 22 non-manager staff). The selected hotels were chosen for their similar characteristics so as to get a uniform sample profile data. However, qualitative research findings can be tentatively generalised to similar contexts only. All the three sets of interviews had the same content so as to enable the observation of how HR managers, supervisors and non-manager staff agree or disagree in their perceptions of HR practices and service quality concept.

### **3.8.1 Semi- Structured Interviews**

Interviewing as a research technique is commonly used in management research, although there are many different types that the researcher should be aware of (Yin, 2014). Interviewing typically involves receiving answers from participants, and choice of technique usually depends on the depth of knowledge required.

The face-to-face semi-structured interviews of the hotel managers took place during interviewees' free time, away from their workplace and at a place of their convenience. According to Widdowson (2011) the typical environment of an interviewee could be defined as the environment within which an interviewee feels comfortable and secure to express a personal opinion or belief. Such an environment, for example, could be the workplace of a participant (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The semi-structured interview tool was selected as the researcher

does not have the chance to meet the participants more than one time. In addition, the semi-structured interview guide provides a rich set of instructions for interviewers and can deliver reliable, comparable qualitative data (Adhabi and Anozie, 2017). Some examples of the questions that were used in the interviews are: How would you describe your experience of applying high service quality in your hotel? Is there any difficulties or problems? How would you describe the incentives and rewards system provided by the hotel management? And, how would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality? (See Appendix 3).

Consequently, data collection at the interviewee's place, during a day off and away from the workplace eased their responsiveness and improved communication effectiveness (Yin, 2014). Three weeks prior to interviews, an e-mail for hotel managers was sent asking for the voluntary participation of managers as recommended by Rossetto (2014). A phone call followed to guarantee the receipt of the email and to arouse the curiosity and interest of hotel managers to voluntarily participate in the interviews. The phone call was neutral in nature, asking for managers' voluntary participation. The researcher did not try to convince or to force anyone to participate in order to ensure that all participation took place in a non-biased manner as recommended by Rossetto (2014).

The data for the study was obtained during interviews by notes writing and audio-recording. Besides, during the interviews, field notes were taken and at the same time the non-verbal behaviour of the interviewees was observed. The findings that were generalised are the non-verbal behaviour of the interviewees and the audio recording findings from the interview. This was achieved by a uniform sampling profile. This is generalised because to obtain such findings one needs to be in the entire hotel - something which is impossible. The data collected from recordings was stored electronically and the NVIVO 10 software enabled the researcher to collect, organise and analyse the unstructured aspects of the data. These qualitative data were analysed using an interpretive approach. Transcription of the recording and field notes enabled coding of these data (see appendix 6). The codes obtained from the conceptual framework and the analysis of data for the benefit category (Barnes and Adam, 2017).

The notes required sophisticated understanding and interpretation of the texts through an examination to establish the differences and similarities that allowed for descriptive and explanatory outcomes. The themes that were common for the units of the HR practices were

studied. Any deviations from the practices were noted as the difference between one hotel and another. The stories that emerged from the data were guides towards establishing an understanding of the study questions (Barnes and Adam, 2017). Some variances such as gender, age and years of experiences might impact the results of the study. However, these variances cannot be determined until the study has been completed, as they are part of the findings. The interviews explained employees' real-world experiences in 5-star Canadian Hotels. Interviews were recorded and conducted face-to-face. The employees who consented to participate signed informed consent and confidentiality agreements prior to the interviews.

Brinkmann and Kvale's (2015) approach in terms of collecting data through interviewing has specific processes, principles, and methods of inquiry. For example, Brinkmann and Kvale's approach specifically focuses on the six steps of interview analysis followed by the three modes of interview analysis. In this study, applying the six steps and the mode focusing on meaning was the most appropriate. The mode process, in which the analysis of the interview focuses on meaning, ensured the interviewer directed questions toward providing meaning and themes, and the questions interweaved subjective and objective perceptions (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Last, the questions are comprehensible, meaning they were posed in a way in which someone comes to know a thing or person through the investigation. The primary evidence was the participant's thinking, reflecting, and intuiting; the questions guided the interviewee in the direction of seeing, knowing, and reflecting (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

The researcher used the face-to-face interview opportunity to ask about issues that the interviewees could share including service quality standards; service quality determinants; HR practices, and/or anything they felt would bolster the researcher's understanding of not only their experience but also how they used that experience in their 5-star hotels.

### **3.8.1.1 Population**

The population of this study is based on the employee categories of low, middle, and high-level hierarchy at 5-star Canadian hotels. The middle managers are supervisors responsible for assigning tasks to non-manager employees while non-manager employees include all employees in non-managerial positions. At the beginning, the researcher had planned to conduct interviews



with the lower level workers and the HR managers only. Purposeful sampling, therefore, was used to select the potential interviewees (Gentles et al., 2015).

### **3.8.1.2 Sampling**

Due to the nature of the qualitative study, the researcher selected the small but representative number of interviewees using a purposeful sampling method as recommended by Moustakas (1994). Purposeful sampling was used to ensure the appropriate sample of the study, which had given more accurate results (Bevan, 2014). Further, the interviewees of the study were selected with the consideration in mind that they were working in the hotel industry of Canada and that they were workers in five-stars hotels in Canada, which ensures their ability to share first-hand knowledge about their perceptions regarding the industry.

### **3.8.1.3 Sample Selection**

The interviewees of the study were employees of 5-star hotels in Canada only, and more particularly from the British Colombia province as it is one of the most tourist attraction areas in Canada. Also, the hotels are chain hotels, thus all of them following the same standards across Canada. Although interviewees acknowledged and agreed to the study results being published, the researcher agreed to not disclose identifiable information that would directly denote the exact locations of the interviewees' organisations - as per the confidentiality statement.

The fact that the research took place in British Colombia province in Canada helped in the generalisation of research findings in Canada for two main reasons. First, British Colombia province attracts more tourism in relation to other provinces, and secondly tourism in British Colombia province has a longer duration, therefore many hotels also operate in the winter. Fifteen five-star hotels were informed of the research and invited to give their consent to be included in the research. "While there are few definitive rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (Bevan, 2014, p.64), it is recommended that six examples or until saturation is achieved. The range and quality of data to be collected in this qualitative research was more important in ensuring satisfactory findings, despite the sample size (Bevan, 2014). The credibility of the study was established through the saturation of the participant population (Corbin et al., 2014).

### 3.8.1.4 Sample Size

In determining the sample size of the proposed applied research, the qualitative nature of the study and data saturation is considered. The sample size reflected the purpose and the aim of the study and data saturation should be concerned with the quality of the collected data. Based on the recommendations of Yin (2017), the researcher planned to conduct at least 12 interviews with different interviewees in identifying emerging themes and patterns. In addition, the guidelines of Green and Thorogood (2009) were also considered for determining the appropriate sample size wherein six interviewees are considered the minimum and 12 is considered the maximum in a qualitative study. However, the point of data saturation was considered in determining the exact number of interviewees. Interviewees were selected on the basis of shared characteristics in terms of having interest in working in the hotel industry, experience, knowledge, and information about the hotel industry – particular for five star hotels in Canada.

The researcher contacted 15 five-star hotels and 6 of them accepted. Sample breakdown is highlighted in the following table. Finally, 34 interviews were conducted from October 2016 to February 2017

Table 6: Sample Breakdown

Category	Hotels participated	HR Managers	Supervisors	Low- Level Staff
No. of interviews	6 hotels	6	6	22
Classification	5 Star hotels	6=HR managers	2= Front office supervisors 2=Housekeeping supervisors 1= Head waiter 1 = Head cook	6 = Receptionist 6 = Waiters 5 = Housekeepers 3 = Event Servers 2 = Cooks

### **3.9 Quality of Research: Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are critical elements of the research process. Leung (2015) advocated that to ensure quality throughout the research process one must create solid methodology on the front-end and rigor in the evaluation of study results on the back-end. Noble and Smith (2015) explained that validity is achieved if the study findings accurately depict the original data, and reliability requires consistency throughout the analytical processes.

Yin (2017) said Triangulation of data, that is, the use of multiple sources of evidence, is a method that is argued for as a means of reducing the threat of researcher and respondent bias, and thus increasing the validity of research findings. Additionally, the researcher is encouraged to establish a comprehensive chain of evidence early on within the research process (Yin, 2014). Therefore, this study achieves validity through using multiple sources of data collection methods and through conducting triangulation techniques to strengthen the validity of the data collected.

The reliability of research findings is the demonstration that the operations of a study, such as the data-collection procedures, can be repeated with the same results (Yin, 2014). This relates to the concern that the tools or instruments used produce consistent results. Within the qualitative data analysis of this study, several tools were used to ensure the reliability issue. Interview consistency, recordings, contemporaneous notes, coding and documents are sources of evidence to ensure reliability.

### **3.10 Transferability and Conformability**

Coding is necessary for data management in qualitative research (Houghton et al., 2013; Gibbs, 2007). In fact, Gibbs (2007) noted that effective qualitative research data management is consistent and systematic. Managing qualitative data encompasses a three-phase approach: pre-coding phase, coding phase, and developing nodes phase. Although managing excessive narrative data in three phases seems simple, each phase requires extensive work.

Pre-coding occurs during data collection (Saldaña, 2009). The pre-coding stage allows researchers to take advantage of the opportunity to highlight, underline, and colour rich words or phrases that appear noteworthy before the completion of fieldwork (Saldaña, 2009). The coding occurs after the qualitative inquiries. The process of coding entails selecting criteria to associate with portions of the texts (Gibbs, 2007). Although Gibbs (2007) indicated coding is not an exact

science, the process does provide a well-defined way of organising text. Applying pre-codes, codes, and nodes as systematic approaches to analysing qualitative data, increase the transferability of the qualitative studies.

According to Cope (2014) confirmability signifies that the support, findings, and recommendations of a study can be traced back to their original sources. Houghton et al., (2013) added that data neutrality and accuracy are important elements of confirmability. The processes, methodology, and protocol used in this study make it possible to audit all resources and findings. The use of NVIVO 10 to develop themes and analyse data offered a clear record of the data refinement process and audit trail for data management. Another advantage using NVIVO provided was the opportunity to check for and eliminate bias from the process. In addition to retaining digital records, audio and paper copies of each interview were archived allowing for independent analysis if ever needed. These collective efforts to ensure confirmability increased the viability of transferability and replicability of this study.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

This research was designed and conducted to comply with the University of Gloucestershire's Handbook of Research Ethics. The nature of this study made managing ethical considerations straightforward and minimal. There was a clear set of agreements with each participant including informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and full disclosure of the study's nature, purpose, and requirements. In addition, interviewees did not face any risks or security issues.

To be successful and objective, an interview should be subject to certain conditions/rules, which will be applied by the researcher as an interviewer before the interview begins. Therefore, before the interviewer begins the process of interviews, the researcher should be authorised to do the research by the competent authorities such as the researcher's supervisors and research department. The interviewees were given a written informed consent agreement form (Appendix 4) that explained the aim and background of the study. Furthermore, the informed consent stated the duration of the study and how the results were going to be used. Both the researcher and participant appended their signature to the form. The participant was free to choose whether to agree to or reject the use of electronic data-gathering devices. The form informed the participant that their anonymous data would be used only in any given study and that it would involve

sharing the data with other researchers. The form also elaborated the voluntary nature of the interviewees. The participant was informed of the right to withdraw from the research at any time. The interviewees were guaranteed anonymity through the use of pseudonyms in the written transcripts and during dissemination of results. The use of pseudonyms hid the identity of the individual interviewees as well as those of the organisations (Saunders et al., 2015).

Due to the fact that the English language is widely spoken in Canada and especially in the hotel industry, it had been decided that the interviews would be conducted in English. Then the interviewer carefully chose the sample of respondents. Further, from the outset, all interviewees' permission was needed. This way, the interviewer was able to obtain the information needed. It is to that end, that the stakeholder's willingness to participate in the research aims was needed. Thus, the willingness of all to take part in the research should be apparent. The interviewer bore in mind that people who agree to give an interview deserve some privacy, which means that the interviewer needed to be flexible.

Because of the limited nature of the interaction between researcher and participant, there were no personal relationships developed between them. To ensure no information was included in the study the interviewees did not want certain things to be revealed, such as trade secrets or intellectual property. Ethical considerations for this study were as recommended by Houghton et al., (2013).

### **3.11.1 Informed Consent**

To ensure the university's compliance with federal regulations regarding the treatment of human subjects, the researcher got the approval from his supervisors for conducting the interviews. They checked the interview questions a few times and agreed on them. Upon receiving approval to proceed with the research, making the interviewees aware of the guidelines was necessary in acquiring consent for their participation. The informed consent document explained to the interviewees their rights as subjects of the research and provided them permission to contact the researcher should they have concerns about the study.

Prior to participating in the interview section of the study, interviewees received the required consent form indicating that they understand the nature of the study and a brief introduction explaining the significance of the research. The consent form reflected the awareness of the interviewees' privacy and the expectations of the interviewees. The letter also explained their

role as contributors to the research and the manner in which the researcher would conduct the study. The consent form was also a release in which the interviewees gave permission for the use of their information in the study and for the use of that information in future publications. In addition, the consent form permitted the interviewees the right to withdraw from the study at any time without recourse or penalty (See Appendix 4).

### **3.11.2 Confidentiality**

The interviewees received a confidentiality agreement, which entailed the interviewees' rights to privacy. The agreement ensured the interviewees that their information would remain anonymous, any answers from interview questions, recordings, and paper notes would contain no identifiable information, and all data would be stored for only research purposes. Additionally, to ensure confidentiality, the researcher coded all information acquired such as the interviewees' identity, conducted oral interviews, recordings and transcriptions of them, then getting their coding and themes for analysis purposes.

## **3.12 Summary**

Following the development of the research question and objectives, presented in chapter one and chapter two, this chapter has identified the research designs that could be followed in order to fulfil these objectives. For this study, the research philosophy was explained and justified. The adopted research approach was then explained.

## **4 Data Analysis of Results**

### **4.1 Introduction**

It was discussed in the previous chapter what the available approaches, methods, tools and techniques for conducting the current research were to be. It was decided that a qualitative study methodology would be utilised involving the conducting of non-standardised interviews with key participants in the Canadian hotels, and the implementation of content analysis techniques on primary and secondary data. This chapter introduces background on the hotels involved in the study; the study that is to be undertaken, followed by hotels data in brief, which is presented in themes that have emerged through analysis; discussion of the findings.

### **4.2 An Overview of the Selected Hotels**

This section provides background information on the selected Canadian hotels for two reasons. Firstly, it was important for the researcher to gain a good understanding of the hotels. As the research is deductive, any information gained from the field was potentially crucial to the study from day one. Secondly, this study aims to gain a broad view of service quality concept and its dimensions from a managerial, supervisor, and line staff approach utilising the multiple perspectives of participants. The hotel sample is purposive, which contains 6 hotels around the British Columbia province of Canada. These hotels are chain properties. Table 7 offers an overview of these hotels. The name of hotels and their specific addresses were not published here for the purpose of confidentiality; however, the hotels' sizes were similar - ranging from 365 rooms to 413 rooms. The table also shows the cities in which the hotels are located: Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby, and Victoria. The researcher contacted 15 five-star hotels. 6 of which accepted. The duration of interviews was between 60 to 90 minutes. Interviewees were selected using purposeful sampling within the selected hotels of Canada so that one HR manager and one Supervisor from each location could be interviewed. These hotels were selected, as they are the most famous hotels in Canada and they have clear HR standards. The selected hotels had the same characteristics so as could be obtained a uniform sample profile data. The sizes of the hotels ranged from 343-401 full-time and 89-114 part-time employees working in different shifts 24/7. The five-star hotels chosen for the interviews received invitations to participate in 60- to

90-minute interviews. Out of 15 contacts with HR managers, the researcher completed interviews with 6 HR managers. The researcher decided to interview the full time workers only.

Table 7: An overview of the investigated hotels

<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Type of Hotel</b>	<b>Size / No. of Rooms</b>	<b>No. of Full-Time Employees</b>	<b>No. of Part-Time Employees</b>
<b>Hotel 1</b>	British Columbia, Vancouver City	Business Hotel	376	370	100
<b>Hotel 2</b>	British Columbia, Vancouver City	Business Hotel	402	398	111
<b>Hotel 3</b>	British Columbia, Richmond City	Resort Hotel	413	359	114
<b>Hotel 4</b>	British Columbia, Richmond City	Business Hotel	390	401	106
<b>Hotel 5</b>	British Columbia, Burnaby City	Business Hotel	367	351	98
<b>Hotel 6</b>	British Columbia, Victoria City	Resort Hotel	365	343	89

Similarly, out of 15 contacts with supervisors, the researcher completed interviews with 6 supervisors or middle managers which included 2 front office supervisors, 2 housekeeping supervisors, 1 head waiter, and 1 head cook. . Similarly, out of 30 contacts with non-manager



employees, the researcher completed interviews with 22 low level employees, which included 6 receptionists, 6 waiters, 5 housekeepers, 3 event servers, and 2 cooks. The hotels had a 40% to 73% response rate on the qualifying survey, and a minimum of 10% of employees for each hotel was interviewed.

As explained in Chapter Three, the use of non-standardised interviews with hotel members and the analysis of relevant documentation were used. One on one interviews with hotel managers, supervisors, and line staff were conducted to validate the most common research issues. All the interviews were transcribed. Most of respondents were initially contacted by telephone and e-mail to ensure their participation. What was also introduced to them was the main objective of research.

Themes began to emerge from the qualitative study, the interviews with hotel members were adapted to include these findings and gain feedback. The researcher followed an iterative process to validate the data, first to get it from hotel managers, then from the hotel supervisors, and lastly from the non-managers level.

### **4.3 Identifying Themes**

The world according to Law (2004) is something messy, and he himself is interested in the mess politics, the process of knowing mess and methodologies for knowing mess. He suggested simplicity will not guide us to recognise this mess but rather, in practice, research needs to be messy and diverse. Consequently, to enable the identification and extraction of relevant data from this messy social environment, it has been necessary for the researcher to adopt a qualitative study research. Every piece of information gathered from the selected hotels was potentially crucial data and had to be included and considered.

#### **4.3.1 Using Thematic Analysis**

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data. Thematic analysis has been chosen to represent this as research themes can be identified from the collected data. Additionally, it is proposed that by

using this method, the data can be analysed without being simplified; allowing the underlying complexity to remain accessible.

Since many computer software packages facilitate the process of thematic analysis such as NVIVO, NVIVO allows the researcher to code data and to group it electronically presenting it in groups or a hierarchy of groups and sub-groups. Following an introductory course to NVIVO the researcher decided that, in the case of the current study, processing and analysing the data by hand as well would provide more accurate and sensitive results.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested six phases that should be followed when using thematic analysis as it appears in Table 8.

Table 8: Thematic analysis phases

	Phase	Description of the process
1	<b>Familiarising yourself with your data</b>	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2	<b>Generating initial codes</b>	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3	<b>Searching for themes</b>	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4	<b>Reviewing themes</b>	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (phase 1) and the entire data set (phase 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
5	<b>Defining and naming themes</b>	On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6	<b>Producing the report</b>	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Source: (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

### **4.3.2 Defining Themes and Sub –themes**

A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. Within the current research, a theme has been defined as a set of behaviours, actions, and / or thoughts that have been displayed by those participants being interviewed. Ideally, there will be a number of instances of the theme across the data set, but more instances do not necessarily mean the theme itself is more crucial (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Researcher judgment is needed to determine what a theme is. However, themes will be coded by more than one researcher to ensure validity and reliability. Sub-themes are essentially themes-within-a-theme. They can be useful for giving structure to a particularly large and complex theme, and also for demonstrating the hierarchy of meaning within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

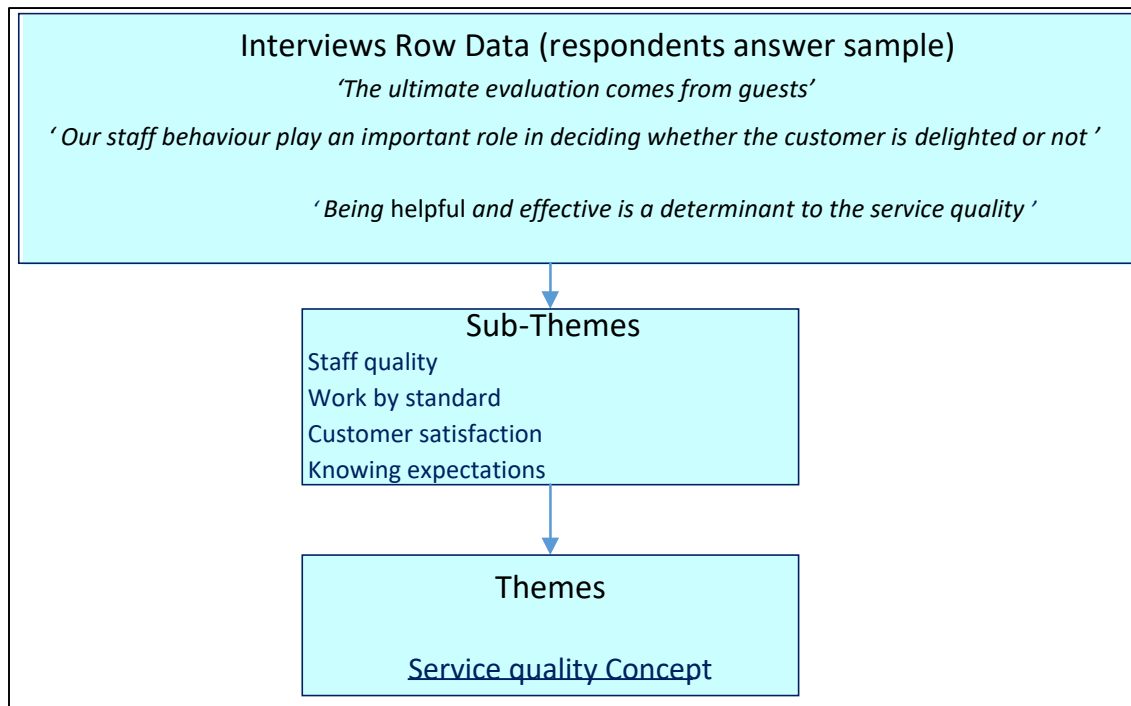
### **4.3.3 A Process of Abstraction**

In order to identify common themes, understand their relevance, a three-stage process of abstraction was developed and followed as represented in Figure 13. It presents an example of one theme: service quality concept, and its subsequent sub-themes and underlying data. The first stage in the model represents the complexity and ‘messiness’ of the raw data. This not only consists of the thoughts, opinions and actions of participating members but also the organisational structure, and contexts which can affect these. This stage was rich in information and provided the researcher with the opportunity to become immersed in his research.

The second stage represents the identification of patterns in the data resulting from the immersion. As patterns reappeared repeatedly, they formed a list of sub-themes.

The following stage involved the identification of the relationships between sub-themes. Once connections between sub-themes had been explored in detail they could then be formalised into a list of key themes. The process is iterative as firstly it is important to ensure no attributes have been missed and secondly for validation of the themes continuing to be evident and relevant. Highlighting these key themes could then address the research question and objectives.

Figure 13: Abstraction process



Source: developed by the researcher

#### 4.3.4 Recognising Themes

Thematic analysis is a long and complex process for the analysis of qualitative data. Subsequently this section provides in-depth detail surrounding how this process was carried out and how themes were identified.

Initially, data resulting from transcriptions and contemporaneous notes was messy and complex. Potentially, any information that could have been deemed relevant to the research question was recorded, and therefore the notes taken during these discussions were long and detailed. Following each conversation, before writing the notes up formally, the researcher re-read the notes and highlighted any information that he thought could be relevant in terms of service quality concept, its dimensions, HRM practices impact, etc. As more and more conversations were conducted patterns occurred within the data and it was possible to define codes to which data could be assigned.

A formal record of the data and resulting codes was kept after each conversation. However, the researcher also took specific points from the notes taken and wrote them on to post-it notes,

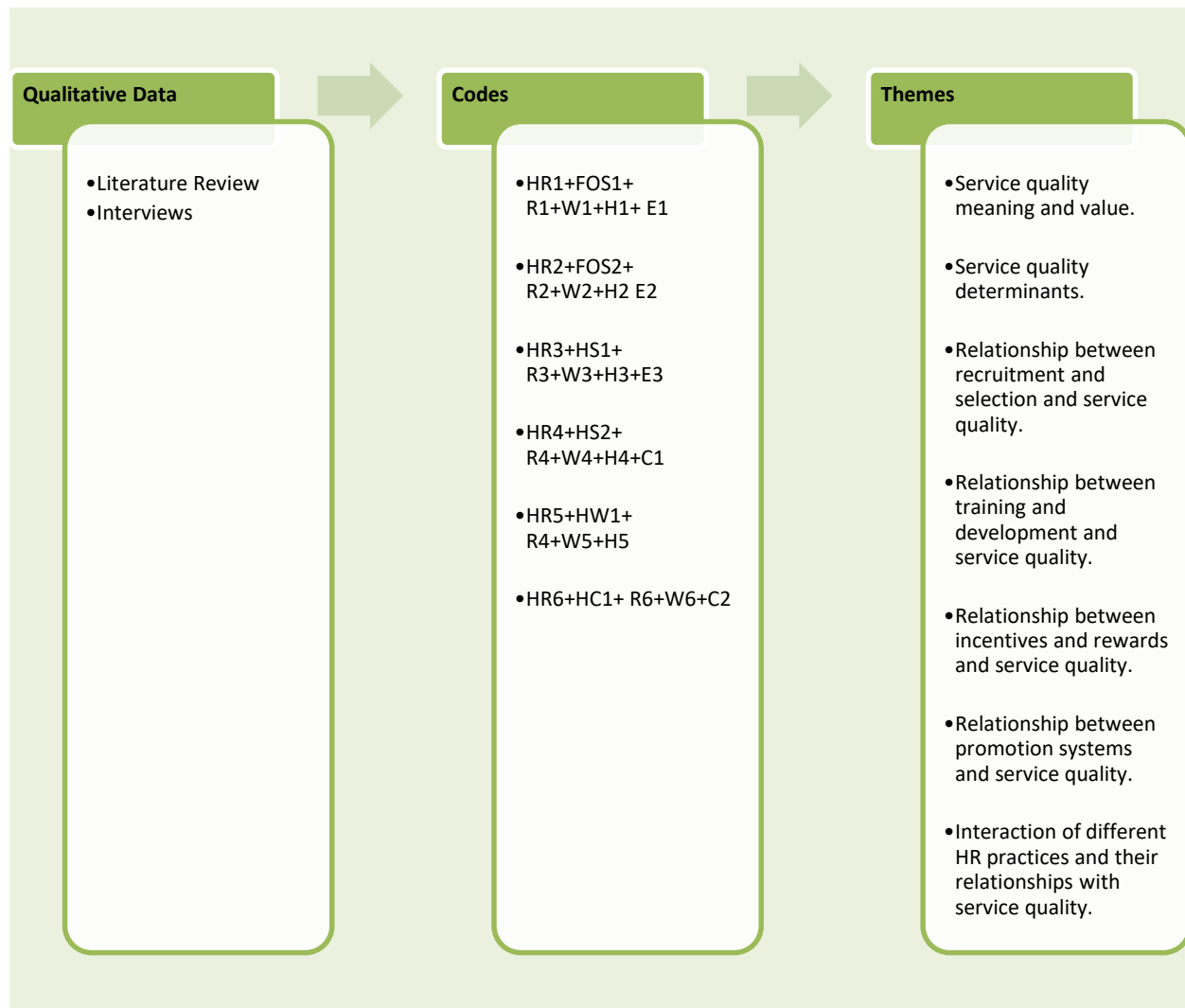
which over time formed a map of ideas. This was an informal way for the researcher to visualise the data and to begin to make sense of it through the development of themes. At the same time, data was being identified from interviews, documentation and literature and relevant parts of the data were identified and coded in the same way as it appears in Figure 15. As more and more data was collected and analysed, groups on the wall of post-its became bigger and the groups of themes were added to, modified and confirmed. Finally, seven themes had been identified. At this time, it was realised that the data being collected was now adding to and confirming existing themes rather than contributing to any new ones.

#### **4.3.5 Data Analysis and Presentation Format**

This section presents and discusses the initial research themes that were identified from staff interviews during the first phase of this research. The insights gained from documents and interviews were recorded and analysed which lead to themes identification. The following seven themes that were identified and are presented and discussed within this chapter are:

1. Service quality meaning and value.
2. Service quality determinants.
3. Relationship between recruitment and selection and service quality.
4. Relationship between training and development and service quality.
5. Relationship between incentives and rewards and service quality.
6. Relationship between promotion systems and service quality.
7. Interaction of different HR practices and their relationships with service quality.

Figure 14: The process of identifying themes from the collected data



#### 4.4 Interviewees Profile

Table 9 shows the coding scheme for each participant in accordance with their position. The coding is merely for identifying the direct quote from individual participants. For the purpose of analysis, the participants were mainly divided into 3 groups: HR managers, supervisors, and non-manager employees. All in all, 34 semi-structured interviews were conducted through 3 rounds (HR manager, supervisors, non- managers) to validate the data after each round.

Table 9: Coding scheme of interviewees

Sample	Position	Number of Interviewees in the Group	Coding Scheme of Interviewees	Years of experience	Qualifications	Gender
<b>HR Managers</b>	HR Manager	6	HR1	15	Master	Male
			HR2	22	Master	Female
			HR3	10	N/A	Male
			HR4	7	Bachelor	Male
			HR5	17	Bachelor	Male
			HR6	30	N/A	Female
<b>Supervisors/Middle Managers</b>	Front Office Supervisor	2	FOS1	8	Diploma	Male
			FOS2	2.5	Bachelor	Female
	Housekeeping Supervisors	2	HS1	7	N/A	Female
			HS2	5	Bachelor	Male
	Head Waiter	1	HW1	15	Certificate	Male
	Head Cook	1	HC1	8	Bachelor	Male
<b>Non-Managers Employees</b>	Receptionists	6	R1	3	N/A	Female
			R2	5	Bachelor	Male
			R3	N/A	N/A	Female
			R4	9	Diploma	Female
			R5	N/A	High School	Male
			R6	1	N/A	Female
	Waiters	6	W1	3	N/A	Male
			W2	8	N/A	Female
			W3	12	Bachelor	Female
			W4	N/A	High School	Male
			W5	N/A	Diploma	Male
			W6	6	Bachelor	Female
	Housekeepers	5	H1	2	High School	Female
			H2	4	Bachelor	Female
			H3	More than 10	N/A	Male
			H4	10	N/A	Female
			H5	About 5	N/A	Female
				N/A		

	Event Servers	3	E1	2	Diploma	Male
			E2	5	N/A	Female
			E3	8	Bachelor	Female
	Cooks	2	C	2	Certificate	Male
			C2	6 months	N/A	Female

Source: developed by the researcher from interviews' transcriptions

The purpose of the first question in each interview (see Appendix1-3) one was to determine background and experience of all 3 groups of employees in this industry. The interviewees mainly mentioned their education, professional experience, and main job roles, duties, functions etc. in their current roles. The researcher intends to draw connections of diverse backgrounds and experiences of different employees related to how they perceive their current job positions, their hotel organisations, how they feel about their responsibilities and duties, their own experience and educational background in effectively handling their current responsibilities and duties and such like and whether this has any direct or indirect impact on the delivery of the service quality.

Table 10 indicated the impressions of HR managers regarding their background and experiences in interviews. In terms of education, the majority of the HR managers indicated that they have completed undergraduate to graduate degrees in HRM. One HR manager also mentioned that he was a certified HR professional in that he had received the training specifically for HR. For example, HR1 indicates that *“I am a trained HR professional. I did my undergraduate degree in business and then pursued postgraduate studies in HRM.”* Few other interviewees indicated that they have completed both undergraduate and masters' degree with specialisation in HRM.

In terms of professional experience, HR managers have on average 16 years of experience, with minimum experience mentioned being 7 years while maximum experience mentioned being 30 years. Five out of six HR managers indicated that they have more than 15 years of professional experience in HR departments in the hotel industry of Canada. In addition, many HR managers indicated that they had experience from at least 2 different hotel organisations. For example, HR1 indicates, *“I have worked in two different hotels in their HR departments”*. The diverse and vast experience of HR managers working in different hotel organisations generally enable them to better understand the effective HR practices that improve quality standards.



Table 10: Background and Experiences of HR Managers

Education, Professional Experience, and Responsibilities of HR Managers	HR1	HR2	HR3	HR4	HR5	HR6
Education/Professional Trainings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Undergraduate/Bachelors' degree in HRM	✓			✓	✓	
Masters' Degree/Post Graduation in HRM	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Professional/Certified Trainings	✓					
Professional Experience (Years)	15	22	10	7	17	30
Number of Hotels (N)	2		2	2		
Main Job Roles, Duties, Functions etc.						
Heading Human Resource Department	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Managing Hiring and Recruitment						✓
Interviewing and Short-listing Employees						✓
Planning Employee Assessment	✓					
Enhancing Employee Relations/Concerns	✓	✓				
Enhancing Employee Morale/Job Satisfaction/Motivation		✓				
Mentoring Employees		✓				
Oversee Human Resource Policies and Practices	✓					
Oversee Legalities		✓				
Oversee Administrative Functions						✓
Oversee Hotel Strategic Planning	✓	✓				✓

**Note:** The Tick (✓) shows that particular interviewee had directly or indirectly mentioned anything about that particular phenomenon. The Blank columns show that interviewees had not directly or indirectly mentioned anything about that particular phenomenon; HR = HR Manager

Table 10 also indicates the main job roles, duties, and functions of HR managers. In terms of main job roles, duties, functions etc., HR managers generally indicated that their roles and

responsibilities ranged from heading the HR department where they plan, execute, and assess employee relations and human resources policies, programs as well as maintain and enhance the hotel's human resources. These results are consistent because there are no standard or specific roles followed by HR managers across all the hotels - as noted by Kensbock et al. (2013). Nevertheless, the below mentioned roles could be considered as some of the most important roles performed by the HR managers in the hotel organisations (Kensbock et al., 2013).

For instance, HR1 indicated, *“My role is maintaining and enhancing the hotel's human resources by planning, executing, and assessing employee relations and human resources policies, programs, and even the practices.”* Some also indicated that they oversee employment concerns, morale and mentoring, legalities, and even strategic planning. For instance, HR2 indicated, *“I am in charge of employment concerns, morale and mentoring, legalities, and even strategies.”* Some also mentioned that they oversee short listing, interviewing, verifying the employees' data, and hiring and inducting of new employees. For instance, HR6 indicated, *“I also oversee short listing, interviewing, and hiring of new employees”*. The different practices of HR from recruitment to selection to strategic planning play a significant role in the issues pertaining to other HR practices and service quality in 5-star hotels.

According to the supervisors or middle managers, they referred to those individuals who are immediate managers in the hotels that are subordinates to their top or senior most management. These individuals are also known as the operational managers who are responsible for operating work activities in a team consisting of at least two lower levels of junior employees (Wikman, 2016). In the hotel organisations, these middle management individuals are also referred to as “Hotel Executives” or “Floor Managers” or “Departmental Managers”. The main duty of these middle managers is to implement the hotel's strategy in the most efficient way. These individuals play key roles in ensuring guest satisfaction as well as the manner in which their subordinates perform. In this regard, the main duties of middle managers in the hotels include creating an effective working environment, leading the team of people to achieve the work targets, reporting to the highest level of management, administrating the work process of their respective departments, making sure that their subordinates comply with the quality standards, ensuring guest satisfaction and addressing any complaints of the hotel guests (Zhang et al., 2008; Kensbock et al., 2013).

Table 11 indicates the impressions of supervisors regarding their background and experiences which they expressed in interviews. The supervisors have not specifically highlighted their education when being interviewed. In terms of professional experience, supervisors have on average 12 years of experience with minimum experience mentioned being 5 years while maximum experience mentioned being 30 years. Five out of six supervisors indicated that they had more than 10 years of professional experience in HR department in hotel industry of Canada.

Table 11: Background and Experiences of Supervisors/Middle Managers

Education, Professional Experience, and Responsibilities of Supervisors/Middle Managers	FOS1*	FOS2*	HS1*	HS2*	HW1*	HCI*
Professional Experience (Years)		2.5				8
Number of Hotels (N)	1	2				
Main Job Roles, Duties, Functions etc.						
Leading the operations of their department	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Maintaining a Constantly High Standard of Customer Service	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Allocating and Managing Shifts of Junior Staff		✓			✓	
Marking Working Hours and Days of Junior Staff		✓				
Providing Training and Support to Junior Staff Time-to-Time		✓			✓	
Supervising Work Activities of Junior Staff			✓			
Assigning Roles and Responsibilities to Junior Staff			✓			
Listening and Addressing the Complaints/Grievances of Staff			✓			
Screening New Applicants for Job in my Department			✓			
Monitoring the Floor Where I am Assigned			✓	✓		
Listening and Addressing the Complaints/Grievances of Customers			✓	✓		
Ensuring that Junior Staff is Adhering to High	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Service Quality Standards						
Mentoring Junior Staff	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Assessing Performance of Junior Staff	✓	✓	✓	✓		

Note: The Tick (✓) shows that a particular interviewee has directly or indirectly mentioned something about that particular phenomenon. The blank columns show that an interviewee has not directly or indirectly mentioned something about that particular phenomenon.

\*FOS = Front Office Supervisor; HS = Housekeeping Supervisor; HW = Head Waiter; HC = Head Cook

Table 11 also indicates the main job roles, duties, and functions of supervisors. Like HR managers, supervisors also do not have standard roles; however, what they have in common is supervision and managing teams of individuals who handle the tasks. In terms of main job roles, duties, functions etc., supervisors generally indicated that their roles and responsibilities ranged from leading their teams in their respective departments to assigning duties to their staff. They are the ones who are responsible for ensuring that their staff, mostly low-low employees or junior staff or subordinates, follow high standards of customer service quality. They are also responsible for managing the working shifts among their staff and in managing the resources in the high season. They are also responsible for ensuring that customers are satisfied and have no complaints. Apparently, their main duty is to ensure that high quality service standards are followed by both themselves and their subordinates. For instance, FOS1 indicated, *“I am responsible for leading the front desk operation ensuring and maintaining a constantly high standard of customer service”*. Further, FOS2 indicated, *“My job responsibilities include managing the working shifts of the junior staff, marking their working hours and days, training and supporting them from time to time and ensuring that the best service quality is given to the guests”*. Every supervisor/middle manager has his/her own specific duties and responsibilities related to his/her roles, how he/she is also responsible for administrative tasks, managing people and tasks, ensuring guest satisfaction, and maintaining the good working environment for their staff.

Non-managers employees are typically at the lowest level of a company’s organisational structure. These employees also include the junior staff and interns. These employees are also known as the operational level employees who perform their daily duties and tasks which are assigned to them by their immediate line managers/supervisors/reporting authority. These

employees hardly or do not possess any decision-making authority and work as per the duties assigned to them according to the orders of their managers. These employees also include entry-level employees or interns who are usually students with little to no experience in the industry and who mainly work to learn the basics of business, gain work related skills, and professional experience. In this study, the employees at this level of corporate hierarchy include: receptionists, waiters, housekeepers, event servers, and cooks.

Table 12 indicates the grouped impressions of non-manager employees regarding their background and experiences which they spoke of in interviews. The non-manager employees working in Canadian 5-star hotels have varied ranges of experience - some being highly experienced working for the last 2-3 decades, while some of them are new employees who joined their organisations within the last 2-3 years.

Table 12: Background and Experiences of the Non-Manager Employees

<b>Background and Experiences of Non-manager Employees**</b>	<b>R1-6*</b>	<b>W1-6*</b>	<b>H1-5*</b>	<b>E1-3*</b>	<b>C1-2*</b>
Main Job Roles, Duties, Functions etc.					
Perform Day-to-Day Tasks and Duties of My Role	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Starting with some different job role than present job role	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Received Professional Training for Present Job Role	✓				
Internship	✓				
Part-Time Job with Studies	✓	✓			
Satisfaction with Pay/Salary/Wages	✓				
Loyalty with Hotel	✓		✓		
Same Profession Entire Career	✓	✓	✓		
Senior Employee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dissatisfaction with Job		✓	✓		
Satisfaction with Job		✓			
Satisfaction with Working Environment	✓		✓		

Intention to Quit Job			✓		
Cannot Switch for Another Job			✓		

Note: The Tick (✓) shows that a particular interviewee has directly or indirectly mentioned something about that particular phenomenon. The blank columns show that an interviewee has not directly or indirectly mentioned anything about that particular phenomenon;

\*R1-6 = Receptionist 1 to 6; W1-6 = W1 to 6; H1-5 = H1 to 6; E1-3 = Event Server 1 to 3; C1-2 = Cook 1 and 2.

\*\*Responses are grouped for each position of Non-manager Employees: Receptionists, Waiters, Housekeepers, Event Servers, and Cooks

Table 12 also indicates the main job roles, duties, and functions of non-manager employees. Given the fact that non-manager employees work at an individual level, they tend to be largely concerned with how much value their job provides them. In terms of main job roles, duties, functions etc., non-manager employees were quite expressive in their responses. The employees' responses ranged from their experience in that particular department, their learning, their responsibilities, their shifts and rotations, and their overall feelings of their journey to date in hotel industry. This includes their satisfaction about the job and their overall feelings towards doing this job. The employees generally mentioned that their basic duty was to perform day-to-day tasks and duties of their roles assigned to them by their managers. Many employees also indicated that they had started with some different job role than the job role they were currently engaged in, thus indicating that low level employees are rotated in different departments and functions based on their capacity, skills, experience, and interests. This is manifested by the response that the majority of employees across all the groups are very experienced in the hospitality industry and it is a norm to rotate employees from one job role to another. For instance, R1 indicated, *"Actually, I started as a room keeper and then enrolled for some courses and got some training resulting in my working as a receptionist."* Some non-manager employees mentioned that they are simply working to make ends meet and that given the option they would even move to other jobs and industries; yet others mentioned that they were quite happy with their jobs and duties which they performed during working hours. Some employees show their dissatisfaction related to low-pay, lack of motivation, shift-rotation, bad working environment, difficult industry to satisfy the clients, no recognition for performance, and various other reasons for dissatisfaction. For instance, H5 indicated, *"I have given almost my whole life to this hotel."*

*Working here over the past 30 years in the same position yet with little increment makes me feel like quitting this job as a means of livelihood, I will have to work here. And also, at this age, I won't find a better job than this because I will again have to start from the beginning which will be even worse; so ironically I am satisfied with my job."* All these perceptions give clues about their reasons for working at their current hotel organisations which influence their behaviour directly or indirectly in terms of delivering service quality.

All the three groups of employees have different background experiences. The HR managers and supervisors tend to have slightly more experience in the hotel industry as compared to non-manager employees. In addition, HR managers and supervisors have higher education and training compared to non-manager employees. The experiences, education, and training of HR managers and supervisors are important considering the positions and responsibilities they are holding. This naturally also enables them to better understand the service quality standards, have more exposure with the client needs, and ability to manage teams of people. While HR managers generally provide the opinion from the top-management point of view and non-manager employees generally provide the experience related to serving the guests, the supervisors can actually provide the opinion in-between to give the clue of gaps, if any, in delivering the service quality. Generally, the HR practices and policies designed by HR managers for non-manager employees are not effectively communicated to non-manager employees – and it is this that causes the gaps in service quality. Hence, supervisors play a significant role in the hierarchy to ensure that HR practices and policies are well communicated to non-manager employees in their teams. They are thus more responsible towards ensuring that a 5-star hotel is not compromising on quality standards on any level. They act as a bridge between top management and employees to ensure that service quality plans are effectively executed. In this regard, HR managers need supervisors to deliver their HR practices and policies in order to ensure that service quality standards are met.

#### **4.5 Theme One: Service Quality Meaning and Value**

The interviewees were asked about what service quality means. The purpose of the question tries to achieve the first objective of evaluating the degree of hotel staff awareness of different service quality dimensions. The literature reported that service quality terms are considered as being an organisation's practice, which has a powerful influence on organisational performance,

profitability, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in long the term. It refers to the satisfactory outcome between expectation and performance. The quality of a service is a measure of how well a service has coincided with the client's expectations. Quality service means the management's ability to satisfy customer's expectations through the services offered on a lasting basis (Satsanguan et.al. 2014). Results of the interviews indicated that there are many service quality concepts - indicated as follows:

First, the majority of the hotel managers defined it in the light of customers, and doing such, found that it coincided with previous literature. This was typified by such expressions as: *“knowing the hotel standards and coping with customer expectations”* (HR1); *“meeting customer expectations”* (HR2, HR6); *“satisfied customers”* (HR3); *“meeting customer feedback”* (HR5).

However, only one hotel manager offered a theoretical definition of service quality *“Service quality is comprised of a purposeful assessment that reflects the customer's observation of specific aspects of the service offered. These aspects are comprised of consistency, receptiveness, reassurance, understanding, and tangibles”*. This concept coincides with Parasuraman et al. (1988) and Grönroos (1990).

Whereas, the hotel supervisors defined service quality according to their operations and their job tasks such as: *‘I thought that service quality meant high quality standards as determined by the hotel. However, I have come to realise that there is more to service quality than just that since it all depends on what the customers think’* (FOS1); *‘According to me, each and every thing in the hotel counts for service quality but we should not forget that people are of different natures, their likes and dislikes are a lot different from each other - for example, one customer may like the swimming pool area whereas another may find it to be boring’* (FOS2). In the housekeeping department, service quality is considered as being that *‘service quality involves ensuring that the rooms and the beds, as well as any other item in the hotel rooms, are clean, neat, and in good order’* (HS1). While in the kitchen it could defined as per the following: *‘As a cook, some of the aspects that are used to determine the service quality of our service comprises of the following - freshness of the meals served, how the meals are prepared, promptness of the service, which means how fast we prepare the orders placed, and the appearance of the meals that we serve,*



*especially the dishes that are used to serve the meals on and how the meals are presented on the dishes’ (HK1).*

Not to forget, the non-managers perceptions of service quality concept surprisingly generally agreed with the above-mentioned perceptions of the hotel managers. They defined quality in accordance with meeting customer expectations and delivering the best of them so as to engender customer satisfaction in the hope that existing customers would continue to patronise the hotel (R1;R2; R3; R6; W1; W2; W3;W3;W6;E2; E3; C1;C2). This result coincided with Grönroos (1984) and Parasuraman et al. (2005). Moreover, the housekeeping staff found that service quality is an issue of cleanliness (H1; H2; H3; H4; H5).

The problem of delivering a low level of service quality was noted in Hotel 5 as the waiter said ‘. *I am literally disappointed on this matter because the clients are very harsh and rough on us. They don't know how to speak to the subordinates. Also, I try to give my best almost all the time. I try to do things as much as I can do but still they complain about us to our managers. This is the most annoying thing on my part’ (W5).* This result was supported in the previous literature (Salvioni 2016; Gaur and Herjanto 2017; Moore, 2017) that reported this research issue in the Canadian hotel industry.

The findings related to the value and importance of service quality are illustrated in the following Table.

Table 13: Importance of Service Quality in Hotels

Importance of Service Quality	HR Managers	Supervisors	Non- Managers Employees
1. Achieving Customer Satisfaction	✓	✓	✓
2. Building the Team of Highly Trained and Effective Staff	✓	✓	✓
3. Meeting or Surpassing the Expectations of Customers Regarding Services in Hotels	✓	✓	✓
4. Getting Fewer Numbers and Lower Frequency of Complaints or Addressing Dissatisfaction	✓	✓	✓
5. Maintaining the Reputation and Consistency of Services	✓	✓	✓

Offered in 5-Star Hotels			
6. Achieving Customer Retention or Loyalty	✓	✓	✓
7. Collecting Feedback from Customers About Services	✓	✓	✓
8. Responding to Customers' Feedback or Complaints or Suggestions	✓	✓	✓
9. Recommendations of Customers to their Friends, Family, Colleagues etc.	✓		✓
10. Coordination Between and Across Departments	✓	✓	✓
11. Offering Customised Services to Clients		✓	✓
12. Attracting New Customers	✓		✓

Source: developed by the researcher from interviews' transcriptions

Table 13 showed the thematic analysis regarding the values associated with service quality. The NVIVO analysis resulted in different nodes from this question. Each group of interviewees have associated different value of service quality in hotels as numbered in the following sub sections:

### 1. Achieving Customer Satisfaction

Achieving customer satisfaction is one of the important values attached by employees to service quality.

The findings of this study coincided with previous literature (e.g. Chow et al., 2006 ;Abu Alanain, 2009; Jung et al., 2012; Hanif et al., 2013; Santhanam et al. 2015; Li et al., 2016; Tongchaiprasit and Ariyabuddhiphongs ,2016). All three group of employees associated achieving customer satisfaction with the meaning of service quality that should be strengthened further by HRM to improve the service quality outcomes. For instance, HR1 indicated, *“in situations where we cannot meet the expectations of our guests they will leave a feedback indicating they were disappointed for the low level service they received.”* This suggested that achieving customer satisfaction is the topic priority for the hotel organisations. HR2 indicated associating customer satisfaction with service quality *“will have a positive experience with our hotel”*.

Moreover, HR4 further associated meeting the minimum expectations of customers with service quality by indicating, *“the service quality is, in that context, quite important for us, since it determines whether our customers get what they expected from us or not and if they are satisfied”*. Apart from that, HR5 associated high quality service with the customer satisfaction by indicating, *“It is a critical factor in determining whether the customers are satisfied with the services that we offer or not. The customers are only going to be satisfied with a high-quality service, and that will eventually have a positive impact on the hotel.”* This suggests that customers who rate hotels on higher scales of service quality are considered to be satisfied customers.

Among supervisors, FOS1 associated service quality with achieving customer satisfaction through high service quality. Achieving high service quality is challenging yet important for five-star hotels. In this regard, HS2 indicated, *“Working in a five-star hotel makes you go that extra mile in order to satisfy the customers”*. HC1 further elaborated on this, *“Service quality is mainly important for if the food that we prepare is not of high quality, it will end up leaving all the customers who have ordered for food from the restaurant disappointed.”* These responses further establish that achieving customer satisfaction is the important component for service quality in five-star hotels.

Among non-manager employees, R2 associated service quality with happiness of customers. He mentioned that, *“In our hotel service quality is about the customers being happy. We specifically have to ensure that the customers are happy with what they get from the hotel.”* He further elaborated on happiness in the way that, *“Service quality is important as it ensures that the guests are happy.”* W1 also shared their perception regarding what they associate with service quality. He indicated, *“Service quality is all about making our guests happy. As you may be aware, if the guests are happy with the services offered, they will be certainly satisfied and will adopt the view that the service offered is of good quality.”* This is important because it determines whether customers are satisfied with the services offered.

A good service quality is going to ensure that the customer is satisfied with what is offered while a bad customer service is going to result in unsatisfied customers. “Although the tasks carried out by hotel employees may differ by position and title, there is one common requirement that encompasses the various positions: ensuring paying customers are happy. Keeping customers

satisfied can often be a laborious and emotionally exhausting task, as hotel employees must always appear preternaturally pleasant, no matter the situation, or fear losing their jobs” (Chu et al., 2012, p.53).

Among the housekeepers, H1 associated service quality with ensuring cleanliness and fresh environment of rooms. He indicated, *“In my case service quality means providing best quality quilts, arranging the mattress in the proper manner, use of room freshener, overall arranging of the room in such a manner that is next to new and so which customers themselves find attractive and pleasing.”* The employees in hotels are also responsible for adhering to health and safety guidelines so as to ensure high service quality and customer satisfaction.

## **2. Building the Team of Highly Trained and Effective Staff**

Building the team of highly trained and effective staff is the second most important value associated with service quality. The lack of a competent, highly trained, and effective staff can potentially lead to low productivity and a serious decline in service quality, directly reducing levels of customer satisfaction. R1 said *“sometimes I fail to deliver excellent service to the guest because of the lack of training or lack of the knowledge of the process and this caused complaints from customers”*. HRM policies may play an important role in improving organisational performance by creating a positive internal work environment. Specifically, HRM policies may directly influence organisational performance through selection of the right employees, involving employees in decision making, and adopting a flexible work design; thus, achieving high organisational efficiency, improved quality, and increased customer satisfaction. HR5 mentioned that *“positive work environment is something necessary to increase the service quality and this should be considered when we set the policies and rules”* and this is consistent with (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007). According to Purcell and Hutchinson (2007), staff that feels committed to satisfying the customer and does whatever it takes to ensure customer satisfaction will determine successful service. The previous research demonstrated the level at which employees contribute to teamwork, something which is reflected in their collaboration orientation, which ultimately leads to high service quality standards (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007).

All the interviewees indicated their different importance views related to building a team of highly trained and effective staff and their participation at all levels. Many employees associated building a team of competent, highly trained staff with service quality. The HR managers indicated that for achieving high quality service, all their employees had to be thoroughly trained on how they were supposed to offer services to the guests. Moreover, they design the policies to keep their staff to be clean and professional when they are interacting with the hotel's customers. The supervisors also indicated that their experienced and long-serving staff are important in their teams as a means of identifying the service quality issues. They suggested that they supervise them, and, if they have any issues, then they provide their assistance in resolving them. The supervisors also indicated that they help their staff in identifying the nature of the guests, and so tell their staff to serve those guests in a particular manner. For instance, FOS2 said *"I always tell the receptionist to be patient with elders because elders communication and reaction would be different from the young people"*. They suggested that experienced employees are respected in their hotels and that they encourage their subordinates to interact with more and more guests as experience with each and every guest can help them understand what the guest really expects from the service quality of their hotels. These results agree with Khan (2010).

Furthermore, the non-manager employees also associated service quality with building competent and effective teams for service quality. W2 indicated that *"in my day-to-day job, I need to ensure that the customers coming to the hotel to get good service quality"*. The hotel always ensures that employees are thoroughly trained on how to offer quality service on a regular basis. Moreover, H3 indicated that *"the management has given us strict orders to adhere to the service standards of the hotel and basically each and every month there is a session on service for each of the employees"*. Also HR6 said, *"if they do not adhere to the service quality, then they would likely face the consequences of being fired from their job at that very point of time"*. So, they must make sure not to neglect the service quality. Training is therefore an important component in building the effective and competent teams apart from experience.

They further suggested that they go through proper training sessions during working hours or at the end of their shift when they can be trained as to how to regulate their behaviour towards customers and enhance their service quality by proper mentoring, and by finding solutions to

their problems. In the training, they are taught to receive the guests with a pleasing smile so as to lighten their moods, and by requesting them to take their seats to the restaurant for example. After a while, they need to explain the hotel services honestly to them and understand the customer needs in relation to what they are expecting. A smile is a very important gesture in the customer service of hotels; this is taught to employees in all positions as a means of making their guests happy and to allow them to feel positivity in the environment. R4 said, *“it is always important to smile for the guest and this would show that the guest is important and you are happy to help”*. They are also trained from the beginning that the customers are assets and they have to please them at any cost. These views were in agreement with Kern and Grandey (2009) who reported the potential of service quality in services.

### **3. Meeting or Surpassing the Expectations of Customers Regarding Services in Hotels**

Meeting or surpassing the expectations of customers regarding services in five-star hotels is another value attached to service quality by the interviewees. While service orientation is a key component in the hotel industry, there are factors that make providing service a challenge. The hotel industry provides heterogeneous, intangible, perishable, simultaneous, inseparable, and multi-phased experiences for customers (Walker, 2011).

The majority of HR managers (HR2; HR4; HR5; HR6) indicated that meeting or surpassing the expectations of customers is associated with service quality. HR2 indicated that *“any customer served at their hotels has a certain expectation of the kind of service that he/she is going to get from their hotel”*. In that view, service quality quantifies the extent to which a service is delivered, contrasted to the expectations of the customer. Therefore, even though people tend to think that it is the hotel that determines the service quality, it is largely viewed that the service quality is determined by their guests since if they can meet or even surpass their expectations, the guests will be of the view that the service quality offered is very high. HR5 also indicated that for them, *“service quality means surpassing the expectations of the customers”*. When a customer comes to their hotel, the customer has some expectations about the quality of the services and products on offer. Consequently, if they can be able to meet these expectations and actually surpass them, the customers will definitely feel that they have been offered quality services. R3 for example mentioned that *“sometimes the guests are expecting to see clean and*

*big swimming pool and if they don't see this when they arrive, they become unhappy*". Hence, when employees of hotels are able to meet the expectations of their guests and fully satisfy them, it is at that point where it can be said that those hotels have offered their customers five-star service quality.

On the other hand, satisfaction of the customers tends to be more inclusive and is mainly determined by perceptions of service quality, product quality, and price that the customers have to pay among others. For instance, when customers pay premium prices for the services offered by the five-star hotels, they expect the best quality and nothing less than what would be offered by hotels of below five-star rating. R6 said *"we sell luxury rooms at very high price and when the guest has this room he or she would expect to get unbelievable services and we must really work hard to make them ok"*. Moreover, they indicated that service quality is the degree to which the customer's perception of the services that the hotels' offers are met. In the five-star hotels, especially, the customers hope to receive the best quality of services possible, so if the services that hotels offer to their guests surpass their guests' expectations, the guests are going to say that the service quality is high.

The supervisors have also indicated that meeting or surpassing the expectations of customers is associated with service quality. They indicated that service quality is not all about meeting the quality standards as determined by their hotels. Instead, there is more to service quality since it all depends on what the customers think. For example, HS2 mentioned *"five-star hotels can offer services that the hotels think are of high quality standards only for the customers to state that they feel as if the services offered were not of high quality"*. Hence, service quality is determined by the customers. The supervisors indicated that most of the time, they are able to judge what they want, how they want and when they want so this information is carried forward to their non-manager staff under their reporting.

The non- manager employees have also indicated that meeting or surpassing the expectations of customers is associated with service quality. They indicated that service quality consists of views and opinions that their customers have regarding the services that are offered by their hotels. It is about services from welcoming guests, assisting the guests with any questions that they might have, ensuring that the rooms that they have checked into are clean, arranging for room cleaning if they happen to request their rooms to be cleaned, and providing the meal services if they have

requested for one. H2 said, *“in our hotel the customers expect very clean sheets with nice smell, and if they see any dirt or bad smell they will be disappointed”*. They further indicated that service quality is the first priority for their hotels, which is meeting the customer expectations. These previous results coincided with others – among whom are: (Twenge et al., 2008; Watkins, 2008; Sliter et al., 2010; Rawson et al., 2013).

#### **4. Getting Fewer Numbers and Lower Frequency of Complaints or Addressing Dissatisfaction**

Getting fewer numbers and lower frequency of complaints or addressing customer dissatisfaction is also associated with the values of service quality. Service quality is therefore important for five-star hotels since it has a great impact on the operations. For example, if guests complain about the services, and hotels in return do nothing, the demand for the hotel, rooms and services will, in time, drastically decrease (Kensbock et al., 2013).

Many HR managers' views were associated with getting fewer numbers and lower frequency of complaints or addressing customer dissatisfaction with regard to service quality. They indicated that when the customers were not satisfied, it was obviously going to have a negative impact on the overall operations of their hotels. For instance, HR1 said *“the disappointed and unhappy guest will mostly not come back again to the hotel and will talk badly about our services and this will ruin the image of our hotel”*. In addition, supervisors indicated that when customers are not impressed, they will not come back and that will have a negative impact on their hotel businesses. HS1 said, *“if the quality of service is poor, for example if the beds in the hotels are not straightened, the customers will not come back to the hotel”*.

Furthermore, the hotel supervisors who participated in the interview similarly indicated that they do not scold their employees in front of their customers so that they do not feel demotivated and embarrassed. For example, FOS1 indicated *“that sometimes when the guests complain unnecessarily about the rooms or cleanliness or surroundings, they sometimes tell their subordinates in front of the guests to perform more adequately”*. However, they never take this matter to the management because they are aware that it was not the fault of their staff but rather due to the customers' unreasonable complaints. They simply reprimand the employees in front of the customers to keep the latter content. For example, HW1 mentioned, *“some times the*



*customers complain for no reason. Some of them just shout because the server doesn't come immediately. These mistakes actually we should not blame the workers on them".* They also mentioned that anyone working for the hotel irrespective of the department that he/she is working in is responsible for making sure that customers make no complaints about the service that they receive. In the case of the guests being unhappy with the services and products that are provided by the hotels, the guests will not come again to such hotels and will also speak negatively about these hotels. So, in order for any given hotel to be successful and to be able to compete in the market, service quality has to be taken care of.

However, the non-manager employees further indicated that sometimes even when customers do not complain, they are scolded for their low energy body language. Their body language is noticed daily by their supervisors and if it is clearly visible to their supervisors and managers, then they can take strict action against them even without any evidence. E2 said, *"I must always stand up in very professional way even if there is nobody around. If the supervisor noticed that I am not standing up appropriately he would call me and fix this"*. However, they admitted that receiving complaints of service quality issues and dissatisfaction is more serious. In this case, they are given the warnings at a session whereby they are reprimanded for their misdemeanours and reminded to regulate their behaviour and enhance their service quality. The non-manager employees also admitted that it is important for them to look clean and pleasant as how they appear to the guest will have major effect on guest satisfaction. E3 indicated, *"if we appear unkempt, the guest will not be satisfied regardless of the services that they offer"*.

## **5. Maintaining the Reputation and Consistency of Services Offered in 5-Star Hotels**

The corporate image or reputation of a hotel is defined as the positive memories held by guests after experiencing the consistency of service quality of a particular hotel (Zehrer, 2011).

Maintaining the reputation and consistency of services offered in five-star hotels is one of the biggest challenges for the hotel organisations and therefore many interviewees have associated this theme with meaning of service quality. Service quality is therefore important for hotels since it has a great impact on our operations. For instance, HR2 indicated, *"Remember we are a five-star hotel and we have to offer services that are of high quality to our customers"*. Similarly, other HR managers indicated that being a five-star hotel means that customers expect to receive

the best accommodation and hospitality services that there can be in most parts of the world. It is not an easy thing to achieve only through hard work as hotels have to manage to consistently achieve that over the years. Thus, hotels always strive to do their best in ensuring that their customers receive five-star quality services. They further indicated that the consistency of service quality will determine the success or failure of the hotel. The HR managers further indicated that there are various aspects that come into play when it comes to the issue of service quality. It is important the hotel needs to be clean all the time, and the ambience needs to send out the message that hotels are offering high quality services.

The involved supervisors also indicated that reputation and corporate image as well as consistency are important for service quality. HS2 indicated, *“service quality involves ensuring that the rooms and the bed as well as any other items in the hotel rooms are clean, neat, and in good order. If the bed linens are not ironed and are not straight, that cannot be considered to be quality service but poor quality service and this would have negative effect on the hotel’s reputation”*. In addition, they indicated that customers always attached high quality standards with names and image of five-star hotels - something which cannot be overlooked and needs to be offered at all times. In addition, service quality involves the nature of the services that hotels’ offer. For instance, in the kitchen departments of five-star hotels, some of the aspects that are used to determine the service quality comprises of: freshness of the meals served, how the meals are prepared, promptness of the service (which means how fast cooks prepare the orders placed), and the appearance of the meals that chefs or cooks serve especially the dishes that are used to serve the meals and how the meals are presented in the dishes.

One aspect of quality also involves preparing meals that are of high standards. For instance, C2 motioned, *“all ingredients that cooks or chefs use to prepare various meals for the guests have to be fresh, since, as a five-star hotel, there is no room at all for mistakes and everything needs to be perfect from the outset”*. With regard to five-star hotels, the guests pay very high or premium prices for everything and so they expect high quality services from the hotel all the time. This point is in conformity with (Sanchez-Hernandez and Miranda, 2011).

## **6. Achieving Customer Retention or Loyalty**

Empirical evidence indicates that a positive contribution related to customer satisfaction, redounds positively with regard to the hotel's profitability, return on investment, market share, and even on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Mohsin and Lockyer, 2010; Kandampully et al., 2011; Sanchez-Hernandez and Miranda, 2011).

In the findings of this study, achieving customer retention or loyalty is also associated with service quality – as agreed to by the majority of interviewees. The HR managers indicated that quality of their services is determined to the extent to which their services are used in the future by their guests. In this regard, the hotel guests come again to book the rooms in the future. In this regard, HR2 said, *“when they become regularly satisfied with the services, they could end up becoming loyal customers and will likely use the services that hotels offer in the future”*. The supervisors also indicated that when their customers are satisfied and are convinced that the service offered is of high quality, they are going to become regular customers. HC1 said, *“if the quality of food in our hotel is good this will make the customer come back again and eat”*.

In this regard, the quality service is important for the hotel since if they offer quality services, then their customers are obviously going to come back. This is significant since it determines whether the customers are going to use their services in the future or not. If a customer comes to the hotel and does not like how he is served, he is going to feel that he cannot come back again to the hotel and pay high prices for poor services. However, when the customers are happy with the service quality, they are going to come back and that enhance business continuity. They also suggested that when customers are not happy, then they will most probably not come back to the hotel and eventually opt for other five-star hotels.

The non-manager employees also associated achieving customer retention or loyalty with service quality. They indicated that quality of services in five-star hotels are very important since they determine whether the hotel has more guests in the future or not. The reason for that is due to the fact that most of these guests give feedback to their colleagues, friends, and family about the quality of the services offered, so, it is obvious that if the quality of the service was low, the hotel would struggle to appeal to customers looking for high quality services that are supposed to be offered by a five-star hotel. R4 said, *“some customers come to our hotel because they heard about our services from another friends, or they sometimes check the reviews on the internet and decide to come”*.

Moreover, a happy customer is most likely to become a loyal customer of the hotel. A customer can still use the service if he is not happy in a situation whereby he has no other option but to stay in the same hotel. However, he/she will never come again, for instance, if the room is not well maintained or there are a few issues like some bad smells, dirty pillow covers or quilts being messy – things which can make him/her very annoyed. This is especially true in Canada where customers are very conscious about health and hygiene and thus may refuse to stay at hotels which fall short of health and hygiene standards if options exist for hotels better orientated towards these points. Consequently, hotels need to put all their efforts into cleaning the rooms and making them presentable.

## **7. Collecting Feedback from Customers about Services**

Because services offered in the hotel industry come under the term ‘intangible product’ - i.e. a product which cannot be physically seen or physically measured, it is the feedback of customers which is generally used as the yardstick to measure the performance effort and quality of the service offered. It is important for hotel organisations to market their services by coordinating with the staff, as without their involvement they cannot achieve the level of quality service that hotel organisations wish to create in order to engender customer satisfaction and thus achieving positive feedback. This means that employees are the main players in the service industry, and as such, they must be communicated with and involved in all the processes involved in achieving greater levels of positive feedback from the customers. HR3 mentioned, *“it is very important to work closely with the staff in the hotel because they are dealing directly with customers and this help to know if the customers have any complains or issue”*. For a five-star hotel organisation, which is marketing its services as being premium and superior than others, it is important that they consider the crucial role of front-line staff in providing customer satisfaction and thus receiving positive feedback from customers. The point of interaction between front-line employees and customers is the most crucial moment when customers provide feedback on service that they received while staying in the hotel. This is the time when a five-star hotel can determine whether or not it has achieved the required level of service. It is also considered as being the duty of front-line employees to deliberately request and collect feedback from the guests. Hence, they should understand meaning and value of receiving feedback from the

customer so as to offer high service quality. In this regard, the feedback collected from the customers about services, especially by front-line staff, can be associated with meaning and value of service quality.

The majority of interviewees have associated this theme with service quality. HR managers indicated that they regularly collect feedback from their customers who willingly give their feedback about their experience with quality of services in their five-star hotels. In this regard, HR2 further indicated, *“we normally request our guests to give the feedback on hotels’ services and products”*. From the feedback given, the hotel’s management can then gauge whether the quality of the hotel’s services and products were good enough to meet the expectations of the customers.

For those guests who dine at their restaurants but who do not stay in the hotels, the hotel staff then get their feedback from interactions on social media or even by having the supervisor asking them simply whether they enjoyed the meal at the hotel or not. In addition, they indicated that service quality can only be quantified from the feedback that they get from their customers. For instance, when customers tell them that they were happy with the services that they received from the hotels, then it is an indication that hotel’s service quality is high. On the other hand, if the feedback that hotels’ get from their customers is negative, then that shows that the service quality is low.

The supervisors also agreed that customers’ feedback about hotels’ services is an important aspect of service quality. HW1 indicated, *“we review the feedback left by their customers on a regular basis and act upon it”*. The supervisors admitted that the negative views and opinions that the customers had about the hotel would have long-term negative consequences. The non-manager employees also associated this theme with service quality. They indicated that assessing the quality of the services offered, entailed review of the feedback that the customers gave pertaining to the services that they received. For example, R6 said, *“if it takes half an hour to book in a guest, then the service quality would be considered to be low”*.

On the contrary, when a customer is booked in within five minutes of checking in and the customer leaves a feedback showing that he/she was satisfied with the services offered, the quality of the service offered is considered to be high. They indicated that for measuring the quality of the service that waiters offer, the hotels rely on feedback from the guests that they

serve. The feedback that is given by the customers is normally reviewed on a regular basis and the service quality is mainly determined by the views and opinions that the customers have about the food and the service that they offer.

## **8. Responding to Customers' Feedback or Complaints or Suggestions**

After collecting the feedback of customers regarding the service quality, it is important for hotels to act upon and respond to the service quality issues based on such comments regarding complaints, suggestions or feedback. Many interviewees associated responding to or acting on customers' feedback or complaints or suggestions with service quality. The HR managers indicated that they collect feedback from customers and act upon their suggestions and feedback to improve the quality of their services. HR5 further indicated *"once feedback has come in, we analyse it and, if need be, act upon the feedback"*. The supervisors also suggested that they review the feedback left by their customers on a regular basis and act upon it. For example, HS1 said, *"for turndown services, some customers provided the feedback that they wanted to have it done by 8pm and therefore, we have put in place the necessary measures to ensure that the turndown is completed by 8pm"*.

The non-manager employees also indicated that responding to feedback is associated with service quality. They indicated that the feedback that is given by their customers is normally reviewed on a regular basis and measures taken to address any negative feedback. For example, W5 said, *"if the guests left a feedback saying that even though the meal was of absolutely high quality and tasty, but that they had to wait for half an hour for the meal, then the management should initiate important responses"*. The management may realise that the delay was caused by a shortage of kitchen staff and so decide to hire extra kitchen staff to assist the staff in the kitchen so as to ensure that the captain's orders would be prepared on time.

## **9. Recommendations of Customers to their Friends, Family, Colleagues etc.**

When the customers are satisfied and happy with the quality of the services, they are likely going to recommend the hotel brand to their friends, family and colleagues. This theme can be associated with achieving customer retention and loyalty. A repeated and loyal customer can also

recommend the hotel brand to their friends, family, colleagues and the like. Hence, many interviewees have associated recommendations of customers to their friends, family, colleagues and the like with service quality.

The HR managers indicated that when customers are satisfied, they would likely recommend the services to their friends, colleagues, or even family members in the future. Even if customers only perceive high quality, then they can also recommend the hotel to other potential customers. HR6 further indicated, *“when customers are satisfied, they informally become ambassadors of the hotel as they will refer their friends and colleagues to the hotel”*. The non-manager employees also indicated the same - that satisfied consumers will also recommend the hotel to their relatives or friends and when the service quality is low. They will neither recommend the hotel to their friends nor spread anything positive by word-of-mouth about hotel and its services.

#### **10. Coordination Between and Across Departments**

Successful coordination of departmental/subunits is important for achieving the high service quality and organisational goals (Richard and Johnson, 2001; Lawler and Mohrman, 2003; Dunn, 2006). The management of employees between and across the departments is considered to be essential in general management and coordination of activities within an organisation.

In view of that, the HR managers indicated that all the heads of the different departments are tasked to ensure that their respective departments offer the best level of service quality possible. HR1 said, *“regular meeting are held with departments managers to discuss any issues or to coordinate ....”*. The supervisors also indicated that they are able to coordinate with people from different departments in order to ensure the smooth services. This coordination is often mandatory in some hotel organisations as W2 indicated that *“there is a quality assurance department which looks checks to see that the departments are coordinating with each other in the way of providing high quality services”*. The management informed them that they sometimes need to do extra work just to ensure that the quality of service offered is high. For example, if the receptionist who was supposed to work on the evening shift is late or fails to turn up at the time when another receptionist's or any other employee's shift is coming to an end, then they are required to work a few hours more until another receptionist comes. R5 mentioned, *“sometimes I have to work extra hours in the peak time or if my colleague is late”*.

## **11. Offering Customised Services to Clients**

In the service delivery process, the anticipation to secure high service quality and productivity irrespective of the nature of the task to be completed, routine and scheduled task or the response to guests' unpredicted personal requests, is not clearly defined (Pizam and Shani, 2009; Mohsin and Lockyer, 2010; Crick and Spencer, 2011).

Delivering products and services to customers late, or with poor quality, or at higher costs has a direct impact on profitability and sustainability. Hence, many interviewees have associated offering customised services as per needs or expectations of an individual client with meaning or value of service quality. HS2 indicated that *"each and every thing in the hotel counts for service quality but it should not be forgotten that people are of different natures"*. Their likes and dislikes differ a lot. For example, HC1 said *"one customer may like the food in the restaurant whereas another may find it to be not delicious"*. Accordingly, the hotels need to be prepared to have the same service quality but with customised benefits as per the needs or tastes of the guests; then they should identify what they like the best; so if they like good food, they must give more priority to food while they serve them, or, if they like more of good ambiance, they must provide them with the rooms with the best ambiance. The non-manager employees also indicated that the varieties of choices that are made available to the customers are significant in providing high service quality. For instance, R4 said, *"if the customer has special request, the hotels should fulfil his or her requests"*. It also can be related to the food in the restaurant. If the food is delicious and clean, the customers will be happy. Likewise, the quality of the furniture or decoration can be related to the service quality.

## **12. Attracting New Customers**

Similar to achieving customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer retention, and customer recommendation, attracting new customers is also significantly related to service quality. The new customers can also come through channels of recommendations from existing customers or word-of-mouth – this being related to the reputation of hotel, hence, this theme could be associated with these previous themes. The majority of interviewees associated attracting new customers with service quality. The HR managers indicated that they need to ensure that the hotel keeps attracting as many customers as possible and the only way that is going to be



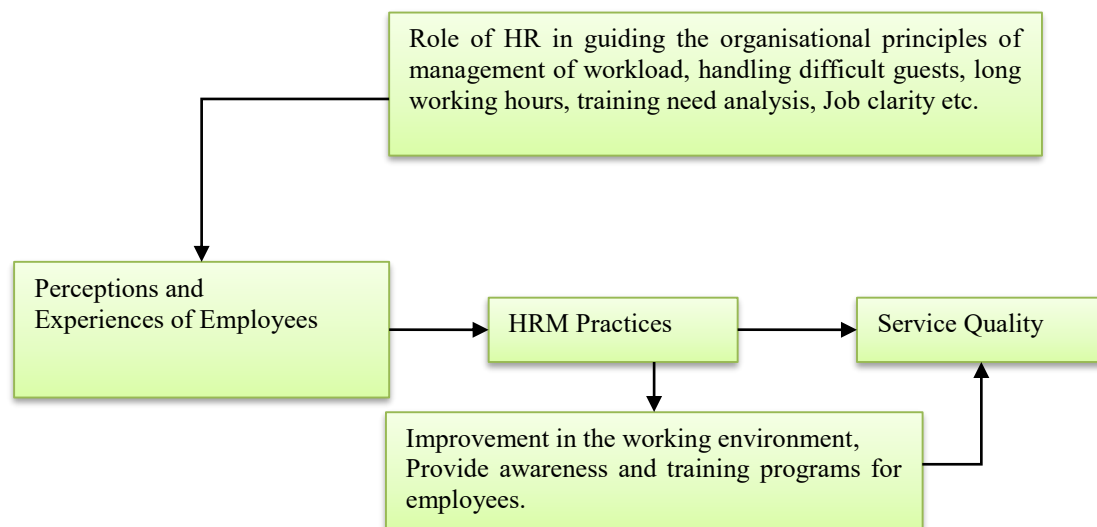
possible is by ensuring that they constantly offer services that are of very high quality. For example, HR3 said, *“it is obvious that the good service quality would attract new guests and this would definitely affect the profitability”*.

The non-manager employees also indicated that attracting new customers is important for hotels. Most of them are when front-line staff interact with new customers; this is how they get to know that they are recommended by their existing customers or that they heard good things about their hotel. R6 mentioned *“one guest told me that he came to this hotel just because his friend recommended it to him and the guest told me now if I feel happy of the service then I will be regular customer”*.

#### 4.5.1 Observation to the Current Status of Applying High Service Quality in the Hotel

A significant observation was settled when asking the interviewees to describe their experience in applying high service quality in their hotels. Following are the responses of employees regarding this theme. Understanding experiences of employees in applying service quality helps in illustrating the relationship between HRM practices and service quality. Figure 15 illustrates the relationship between standards followed for applying service quality, HRM practices, and service quality.

Figure 15 Relationship between Employees’ Experiences of Applying Service Quality, HRM Practices, and Service Quality



Source: developed by the researcher from interviews’ transcriptions

Figure 15 illustrates how employees' experiences of applying service quality can act as a link between the HRM practices and service quality. Hotel employees tend to develop both their positive and negative experiences from their working environment which includes clear understanding of the responsibilities given to them, execution of those responsibilities and handling their daily tasks, handling guests including both pleasant and difficult ones, managing their work-loads, and learning the required skills to perform certain activities in their job. Hence, HR plays the key role in guiding hotel employees regarding organisational principles of the management of workloads, handing difficult guests, long-working hours, training need analysis, and job clarity, so that they could develop positive experiences from their job. The HR needs to facilitate in the improvement in the working environment as well as provide awareness and training programs regarding their roles and expectations and also how they can manage the difficult tasks in their jobs. The results implied (See Table 14) that training and awareness programmes about service quality enable the employees to understand their jobs and duties in providing service quality.

Table 14: Employees' Experience in Applying High Service Quality in Hotels

What Employees Think Constitutes Service Quality and What are their Experiences in Applying those Service Quality Standards	HR Managers	Supervisors	Non-manager Employees
Clear Understanding of Job, Roles and Duties	✓	✓	✓
Applying High Service Quality is Challenging During Workload		✓	✓
Long Working Hours or Overtime		✓	✓
Dealing with Difficult Customers		✓	✓
Having Required Skills and Experience to Provide Good Service	✓	✓	✓
Trainings	✓	✓	✓
Appraisal, Recognition and Motivation	✓		✓
Employing Additional Staff During Busy Seasons	✓	✓	
Ready to Provide Services Even When Not Feeling So		✓	✓
Encouraging Staff to Seek Management Help	✓		

Providing Services to Customers Beyond the Way		✓	✓
Presence of Supervisors and Immediate Supervisors all the Time	✓	✓	
Regular Events for Employees	✓		

Source: developed by the researcher from interviews' transcriptions

Table 14 shows the thematic analysis regarding the employees' experiences in applying service quality. The NVIVO analysis resulted in different nodes from this question. Each group of interviewees have indicated their responses on what they think constitute service quality and what their experiences are in applying those service quality standards. These themes are discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

#### 4.5.1.1 Clear Understanding of Job, Roles and Duties

Having a clear understanding of jobs, roles and duties on the part of the workforce is the predominant factor in relation to employees' experiences in applying high service quality in hotels. The HR managers indicated that they always ensure that all employees have a clear understanding of what their job entails and what they expect from them. They want all their employees to have a clear understanding of the level of service quality that they expect them to offer to their customers.

The supervisors indicated that a clear understanding of jobs, roles and duties are important for applying high service quality. For instance, *"After all, I have been working here for a very long time and it is now in my mind that I need to always do whatever it takes in order to ensure that I offer high service quality."*

Non-manager employees also indicated that a clear understanding of jobs, roles and duties are important for applying high service quality. For instance, R1 indicated, *"As a receptionist, my roles and responsibilities are very clear and that makes it easy for me to execute my roles while at the same time applying high service quality"*. R3 indicated, *"Being a receptionist, I am just aware about my roles and duty. And I have perfectly applied them in my routine"*. R5 indicated, *"I don't think that it is possible for any person to always be able to give best quality service and also it is not possible to adhere to the standards because it is a human tendency to commit*

*mistakes. But as staff members of a five-star hotel we on our own try to be the best we can and provide the best service quality - and this is what is expected of us”.*

W1 indicated, *“Since I have worked as a waiter in various hotels for a long period of time, I know what is required for a waiter to offer high service quality to the guests”.* W2 indicated, *“The experience has been good. Even though I am not very happy at the hotel, I do my best to ensure that I offer the best service quality that I can offer. Even though there are no specific quality standards that we have to follow, we are aware of the various elements that the customers consider when determining whether the service offered is of high quality or not”.* W3 indicated, *“I work for a reason. Why would I work if I did not get anything in return? I believe in maintaining high quality service only if get high quality revenue. I am sure everyone thinks the same way. I have always provided good service so I deserve the tips I earn. Occasionally, be it a small party or a grand festive celebration. I work day and night not for the salary, but for the admiration and praises that I get from the people I serve. I rarely give them cause to complain. My services are always of high quality. I take pride in guiding the younger waiters to provide an equally good service. I am sure that in future the services of all the waiters will be of high quality”.* W4 indicated, *“I have been in this job for the past 16 years so I am well aware of what’s expected of me. I have always been very proud of my job and have provided the best of service”.* W6 indicated, *“There are a few problems like people expecting more from you and how your efforts do not satisfy them. But you cannot blame them as everyone wants the best that they can get. So, I strive harder each time. After all, everyone faces some hurdles in performing work as a housekeeper; I took a vow of always doing my best”.* H1 indicated, *“I provide the best of my services to every customer. I have lived up to my vow. Whatever situation arises, I remain calm and composed. I am the eldest of my lot in age so I have clear experience”.* H3 indicated, *“I have been at this job for the past six years and never have I given anyone any cause to complain about my services. My services are always of the best standards”.*

H5 indicated, *“I have served this hotel for the past twelve years and my services have paid off as I am going to be the head from the next month. I have always believed in giving my best at whatever I do. Every employee has a major role to play. I have always given my most efficient shot and thus I will get the fruit of it”.* E3 indicated, *“Anyone working in a five-star hotel is aware of the fact that they need to offer high service quality”.* Finally, C2 indicated, *“I am a*

*trained cook who spent almost three years studying cooking. So, I do not really need to have quality policies or even anyone supervising me so as to ensure that I offer quality services. I know what is expected of me and I always do my best to ensure that I offer the best level of service possible*". All these experiences related clear jobs, roles, and duties play a significant role in the perceptions of employees in practicing high service quality in five-star hotels as highlighted and recommended by Harper, (2015).

#### **4.5.1.2 Applying High Service Quality is Challenging during Heavy Workload Duties**

Another key theme was the challenge to apply high service quality during the heavy workload duties or peak season. The supervisors indicated that at times and especially when they have a lot of guests or rather a lot of work, as much as they want to apply the high service quality in the hotel, they are unable to do so. However, when there is less work, it is easy to apply high service quality. It should be noted that applying high quality service implies spending more time with the guests and if there is a lot of work to be done, then that could become a challenge at times. The main problem that they face can be considered to come from heavy workload duties since when there is a lot of work, even if they want to apply high service quality, they have to overlook some things.

For example, they can overlook some areas that need to be dusted but which generally do not have usually gather a lot of dust as they want to save time and clean other rooms. For instance, HW1 indicated, *"in any task that a person undertakes, it is obvious that some challenges are likely to be faced. So, when applying service quality in the hotel, we obviously encounter some challenges."* The same is also the case with the other kitchen staff since when they have a lot of work that needs to be done, they normally end up facing a challenge in ensuring that they offer very high quality service. In the case of receptionists, at times, they find themselves not being able to offer high quality services in certain situations. For example, when there are a high number of guests who want to check in at the lobby, the receptionists knowingly avoid some of the quality procedures in order to ensure that they get to serve all the customers in a timely manner.

Even though, they always aim at ensuring that they offer high quality services, they at times encounter various challenges that make it almost impossible for them to offer quality service.

However, the fact that they know the important role that quality service has for the success of the hotel, which makes them always try their best, irrespective of the challenges encountered in ensuring that they offer the best quality of service that they can, they nevertheless do the best they can. For waiters also, at times, and in particular during the holiday seasons, there is a lot of work, and at such times, it becomes difficult for them to offer exceptionally high service quality since they have a lot of work to do. Moreover, there are times when there are only two or three waiters on a shift, and that affects the level of quality offered as they have to serve many customers, which means that they cannot spend a lot of time with customers. W3, for instance indicated, *“The more the number of hands, the less the stress. But on days when the helping hands are fewer, stress overtakes and work is affected.”*

For housekeepers also, on occasions when the crowd is too large, high quality service becomes a faint idea because providing basic services themselves becomes a tedious task. On festivals like New Year and Christmas, most of the staff take leave. In such cases, all the workload, which is double than normal, falls on the shoulders of an even smaller number of housekeepers. In such cases, high quality service becomes impossible as they have to look after all the customers. For event servers, at times, they find that there are few event servers while the number of guests attending the events are many, leaving them with no option apart from focusing on ensuring that they serve as many guest as possible irrespective of the quality of the service that they offer. For instance, E3 indicated, *“As a matter of fact, the major challenge that we commonly face involves the workload since when we have many guests to serve per event server, we have to overlook some of the quality standards since we cannot fully comply with the quality standard and ensure that we serve all guests.”*

According to cooks, at times and specifically when there is low number of guests in the hotel, it is usually very easy to offer high quality of services. However, at times when they have many guests to prepare meals for, it is almost impossible to offer high quality services to the extent that they would like to - they are simply not able do it. For example, they sometimes have to use some shortcuts since they have to ensure that meals are prepared in a timely manner so that the customers cannot complain that they have waited for long to be served. For example, C2 indicated, *“At times, there is a lot of work to do in the kitchen and that means that I have to do some tasks faster than is normally expected”*. These results coincide with those of Jung et al. (2012) as stress hinders the service operations.

#### 4.5.1.3 Long Working Hours or Overtime

Another key theme was long working hours or overtime. The supervisors stated that long working hours at times have affected themselves as well as their team members compromising on quality. Sometimes, they continuously work for 12 hours without even a break. This makes them literally worn out and they feel that there is not a lot that they can do even though they are aware of the fact that they need to offer high quality services. For instance, FOS2 indicated, *“Another challenge for us is to work for continuous 12 hour shifts or if the work load is more we ought to compromise with our time by putting in more time and effort - about 13-15 hours.”* HC1 also indicated that, *“one of the common challenges involves long working hours where I spend at least 12 hrs and even at times 14 hours working in the kitchen”*.

The receptionists indicated that most of the time, even after their duty hours are finished, they have to do overtime as they are still serving the guests in the best possible manner in order to ensure the service quality. During the busy seasons, like Christmas, they are expected to work more as compared to the off-season. They must be ready by knowing that Christmas means everything here in Canada and everyone needs holidays and wants to spend some quality time with their families; yet they never take holidays during Christmas. Even Christmas day itself, they are there working and giving their time to the hotel and guests.

The waiters also indicated that there are times when they have only two or three waiters on a shift - and that affects the level of quality offered as they have to serve many customers, meaning that they are unable to spend a lot of time with customers. They have been working for long hours due to this reason and for some other reasons. For instance, W1 indicated that, *“I worked for 14 hours and due to tiredness, I am sure that I never managed to offer some customers the best service quality as I would have liked. There are many challenges that I encounter but I have to do my best and ensure that I offer the customers the best service quality”*. The housekeepers indicated that on occasions, when the crowd is too large, high quality service becomes a faint idea because providing basic services themselves becomes a tedious task.

As mentioned earlier, on festivals like Christmas and New Year, many workers take leave. In such cases, delivering high service quality would be more difficult due the heavy workload. Event server 3 indicated, *“We face when it comes to offering high quality service involves*

*workload.” C1 indicated, “Some of the challenges faced entails lack of required ingredients, lack of some equipment needed to prepare certain meals and heavy workloads that at times even results in my working 12 hours in a single day”.*

#### **4.5.1.4 Dealing with Difficult Customers**

Another key theme was dealing with difficult customers. The supervisors indicated that they have to deal with every type of customer and their mood swings and tantrums. Sometimes it becomes really challenging to treat customers who are drunk as they have to behave in the best manner no matter how difficult it is to tackle the situation. It does become very difficult when they are treated badly by their customers as it makes them feel that they are unable to provide them with good facilities and it becomes a challenge to treat them politely irrespective of the fact of how they behave themselves. They have to still be calm and perform their duties well. The non-manager employees indicated that occasionally, they encounter rude customers who are mainly drunk and that makes it quite challenging for them to offer quality services for such customers.

Moreover, there were many instances when they have followed the standards and applied high service quality, such as when customers are angry with staff from one particular department, they give vent to their anger with staff from another department. The staff in the other department will, notwithstanding, maintain a polite decorum with the customers; for this they have been given praise by the managers.

According to the management, there are various standards present which are meant to improve their services and all staff have to adhere to these standards. For example, a good quality service was when there was a fight among the guests regarding some issue. So basically, it was the staff who helped to resolve the issue. What they did was to allot different rooms to each party and went personally and apologised to each party on behalf of the other, thus making each party believe that they were the hotel’s priority. They allotted them rooms in different wings of the hotel so that each party did not create problems either for themselves or the other party. Another instance is when they encountered a customer who could not speak in English, and it became a challenge to engender good communication with such a customer, thus rendering it difficult to ascertain as to what the customer wanted. Some non-manager employees indicated that on big



occasions and in the high season, the crowd gets bigger and the people are not very well behaved. Their indecent behaviour makes them upset which further decreases their work efficiency. Some customers always had complaints no matter how well non-manager employees worked.

In companies where the ‘customer is king’ philosophy rules, customers may be valued and viewed as ‘second managers’. They hold this distinction because these mantras provide customers with power through the policies and the procedures created by the organisation. As a result, customers can have more official or implied power compared to the employees who are serving them. For hospitality employees, the display rules, which are the informal rules for what kind of emotions they can display at work, are affected by their status in comparison to customers. Expressing negativity is more acceptable from the more powerful customer, and less acceptable from the lower-status hospitality employee (Grandey et al., 2013). As a result, finding quality employees continues to be a challenge in the industry (United States Department of Labour Employment and Training Administration, 2010).

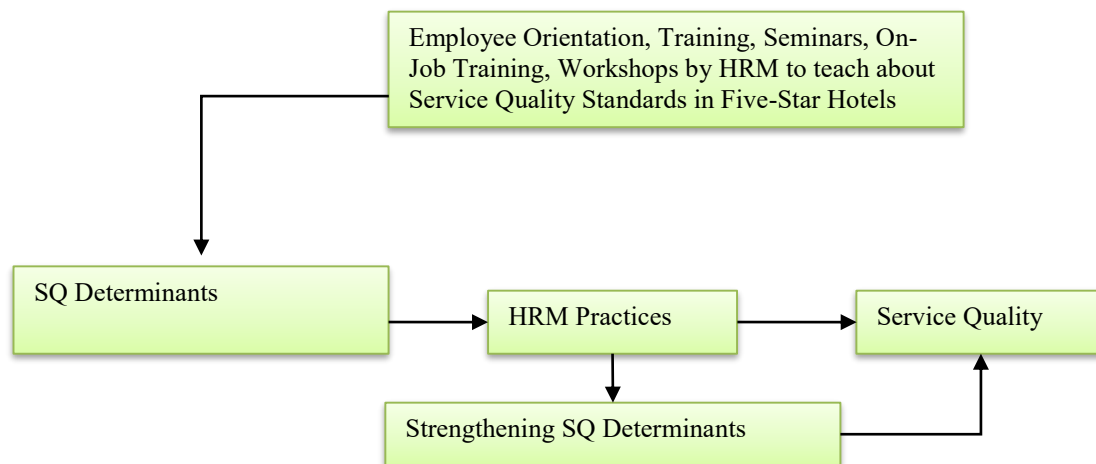
#### **4.5.1.5 Having Required Skills and Experience in Providing Good Service**

The HR managers indicated that as long as an employee has the required skills, applying high service quality in the hotel cannot be a problem. They are aware of the fact that as a five-star hotel, their employees cannot be given any leeway for mistakes and need to get it right at the first time of the customer making a request. They also indicated that all their employees are fully trained and have the required skills and expertise to comply with the hotel’s service quality standards. The employees have good experience, which thus enables them in applying high service quality. The supervisors and non-manager employees also indicated that having required skills and experience to provide good service is essential in the execution of their services.

#### 4.6 Theme Two: Service Quality Determinants

Understanding factors involved in practicing high levels of service quality by employees in hotels, helps in illustrating the relationship between HRM practices and service quality. Figure 16 shows the relationship between factors involved in the practicing of high levels of service quality, HRM practices, and service quality

Figure 16: Service Quality Determinants, HRM Practices, and Service Quality Relationship



Source: developed by the researcher from interviews' transcriptions

Figure 16 illustrates that service quality determinants can act as links between the HRM practices and service quality. It is suggested that there is a lot that comes into play when it comes to service quality and all aspects need to be considered, since if only one aspect is considered, then the other aspects of the services being offered could be comprised to the extent of being of low quality - and that would definitely have a negative impact on customers' perceptions of the hotel. HRM can build the service quality components in employees through different employee orientation schemes, training, seminars, on-the-job training, workshops etc., all of which could ultimately lead the employees to follow service quality standards required for five-star hotels. The main factors associated with service quality are highlighted in Table 15.

Table 15: Service Quality Dimensions

Which Factors are Associated with Service Quality	HR Managers	Supervisors	Non-manager Employees
Reliability	✓	✓	✓
Assurance	✓	✓	✓
Tangibles	✓	✓	✓
Empathy	✓	✓	✓
Responsiveness	✓	✓	✓

Source: developed by the researcher from interviews' transcriptions

Table 15 shows the theme of SERVQUAL factors associated with service quality. Each group of interviewees have indicated their responses on factors relating to the practicing of high levels of service quality: Tabulated results being as follows:

#### 4.6.1 Reliability of Ensuring Consistency in Hotel Services

The HR managers indicated that reliability is one of the important factors taken into consideration when applying high quality service. The HR managers further stated that in the five-star hotel, customers have got very high expectations of those hotels regarding the services being reliable - i.e. getting the hospitality services which they come to expect from hotels at the five-star level. Hence, five-star hotels need to ensure that they are capable of delivering that which they promise to their customers so that the customers feel that they can rely on the hotels. For example, if five-star hotels promise to offer baby cots for their customers with small babies, then it becomes their responsibility to make baby cots available in maximum quantity in order to avoid any shortage. That promise also implies that in case a guest checks in and requests a baby cot, then the five-star hotels can provide it since if they fail to do so, the guest will have the impression that the services being offered are below par and not of good quality and thus not what was promised by the hotels. HR1 stated in this regard, *“As a hotel we do whatever it takes to ensure that we offer our customers services and products that are of exceptional quality”*. HR2 also explained this further by stating, *“Reliability entails fulfilment of the promised services since if the hotel is not able to deliver what it has promised to its guests, then the guests will not be satisfied with the services offered”*.

Reliability is also important for hotel organisations, just as is the case for any other organisation because the quality of the service is only determined by comparing the expectations of the customers with the services that they receive. So, when the hotel customers' expectations are met with the services that they receive from the hotel, the service quality of the hotel can be said to be high while on the other hand, if the services offered fail to meet the expectations of the customers, then the quality of the services offered by the hotel can be said to be low. Particularly, HR3 indicated in this regard, "*Our customers expect that the meals served to them be freshly prepared, the rooms be clean, and the utensils used to serve them be clean*". Likewise, HR4 suggested, "*the main aspects that determine the service quality comprise of consistency*".

Consistency, in this sense, is also referred to as reliability. For example, in case of consistency, if the hotel is unable to serve all customers who come to the restaurant in a timely manner, then there is a high chance that some customers will be of the view that the services offered at the hotel are not of high service quality. In some hotels, reliability can also be explained in the sense of steadiness. For instance, HR5 stated, "*The first factor to take into consideration when applying high level of service quality entails steadiness*". What that means is that customers must be able to get a certain level of service quality at all times that they are at the hotel. So, whether the hotel has many guests or not, the level of quality of services of the hotel should never decline. HR6 better explained this by stating, "*Reliability entails our ability to provide the promised service dependably and accurately*".

The majority of supervisors have also considered reliability as an important factor in practicing service quality in the hotels. They have mostly referred to reliability in the sense of fulfilling the needs, demands and expectations of the customers. For instance, FOS2 suggested, "*The hotel is there to fulfil the demands of the customers, and this being a five-star hotel, whatever they wish for we have to provide them with, and that being on time.*" The supervisors suggested that if the customers' needs are understood, then it is easy for five-star hotels to know what to do in order to ensure the high level of service quality. This is because hotels would be able to take the right measures for improving the service quality after understanding the customer needs. In case the customer feels that his needs have not been met, the customer might feel disappointed and even conclude that the service quality will always remain low. As a result, the customer will probably not come back to the hotel again. Hence, only by ensuring that the service quality is high at all

times, the hotel is going to satisfy most of the customers. These customers will likely come back or at least speak about the hotel positively.

Considering that in five-star hotels, the customers pay premium prices which are normally higher than the prices of hotels of other ratings, it is imperative for five-star hotels that they should do anything possible to ensure that services offered are of high quality. The supervisors indicated that over the years, they have found that customers who prefer five-star hotels are normally willing to pay high prices to receive quality services, and it is from that viewpoint that they consider that no expenses should be spared in order to ensure that the services offered are of very high quality. According to Star Ratings Australia, the five-star hotels are hotels which are classified with high quality luxury services across all the areas of their operations. The customers in the five-star hotels enjoy an extensive range of the benefits and facilities and also highly or compressively personalised services. The five-star hotels at this level of hotel ratings will display excellent design quality and attention to detail on all areas of the services. Given these considerations, the extent to which the five-star hotels are able to understand the needs of the customers, they would be able to meet the special needs for the personalised services required by their customers. If customers feel that their needs are met, they will be satisfied and will go away knowing that they were offered high service quality.

The non-manager employees also indicated reliability as one of the factors involved in practicing and ensuring service quality in five-star hotels. R4 suggested that *“There are other factors which depend from person to person which amid service quality as per their choice. Like recently for one of our guests, a proper gym was taken as a quality service. So basically, we can say that it differs among the people according to their culture.”* This indicated that bad service is not an option in this industry because the customers expect from five-star hotels to be simply perfect at any instance.

The employees in five-star hotels need to be active all the time and therefore they cannot afford to sit down during duty hours or be dealing with the customers. As a receptionist, R4 suggested that *“We have to keep on standing for the 8 hour shift until we have a break. Because it is the front office which is the face of the hotel and you have to be at your best at any given time”*. Only by being persistent in offering the services, the five-star hotel can ensure reliability in their services. The non-manager employees further indicated that their five-star hotels also

accommodate customers with discounts during off or low season. For instance, R5 indicated, *“No, we are not really allowed to give discounts, but sometimes during off season periods when not many guests want to pay the standard high season rates, then we can consult with our managers, and, if they allow it then surely we can give them discounts”*.

Even for some employees like waiters, the customers expect five-star quality service, and therefore they have to offer a service that can be rated to be that of a five-star hotel. Like supervisors, non-manager employees also indicated that they achieved customer satisfaction through understanding and caring about the specific needs of their guests. For example, *“the chefs and waiters sometimes give away free chicken curry rice to guests before they go out on the town. This not only makes them happy but they share this experience with their friends”*. This can demonstrate that five-star hotels provide quality service to their clients, and that each day they try to overcome their mistakes. Hence, each employee needs to contribute in giving high quality service to the customers because in the five-star hotels, the expectations are very high both from the management and the customers. Being the housekeeper, H2 explained how he contributed to high quality service through his job, *“We also have to collect the clothes from the customers for laundry, so I Try to get them cleaned and return them to the customers in as short a time as possible; this is something which is highly appreciated by the customers who sometimes offer us tips for our quick service. This also motivates me to perform my duty exceptionally well”*.

For some non-manager employees, reliability means acting upon the feedback of the customer so that they can feel that five-star hotels care about their suggestions and about improving the service quality as per their expectations. For instance, as an event server, E1 explained, *“Even though other departments in the hotel have these standards, we do not have any standards as event servers”*. This suggested that it is all about the resources that the five-star hotel is willing to allocate in service delivery. In the case of event servers, the hotel needs to ensure that there should be enough event servers for the various events that are taking place, since if the hotel hires few event servers, the event servers will not be able to offer high quality services to the customers attending the events.

Moreover, the hotels need to ensure that those who have booked the facilities for conferences as well as other events are given a wide variety of selections to choose from. For example, the

guests could be given a variety of meals and beverages to choose from as well as the decor that they want to be used in their respective events. For that to be attained, all the employees need to be trained on what they are supposed to do to offer customers high level of service. For example, when an order is placed through the room service, the cooks, at times ask the room service to confirm the order especially when the cooks feel that the staff who took the order missed something. For instance, when a customer orders fried beef, the cooks need to know how the customer wants it so that the beef that they prepare will surpass the expectations of the customers.

The need for a high level of customer service is vital since it is what in the long run determines whether the customers are satisfied with the services offered, and that has a major impact on the long-term success of the hotel. In this regard, all the employees need to do their best to give the best quality of service possible. If the needs of the customers cannot be satisfied and their expectations are not met, the customers will not be satisfied with the services that they have been offered. So, it is crucial that feedback is collected from the customers so that the hotel has a better understanding of whether the customers are fully satisfied with the services offered or not.

#### **4.6.2 Assurance of Hotel Staff to Provide High Service Quality**

Assurance is the key factor in the gamut of factors pertaining to a high level of service quality in five-star hotels. In this regard, the HR managers indicated that assurance consists of the knowledge of the services on the part of the employees, as well as the courtesy of these employees when providing these services. *For example, HR3 said “workers need to know details about the products such as rooms, food ....”*. These combine to create trust and confidence among customers regarding hotel services. Also, it is their ability of how much they convey trust and confidence to their customers. The employees need to build trust through giving customers the first impression that there would no compromise when it comes to the level of service quality in five-star hotels.

The HR managers indicated that it is the responsibility of all the employees that customers should be assured that whatever they happen to order, they will receive with high quality. This is especially important when customers are booking their hotel rooms through phone calls or websites. For instance, *HR5 mentioned “if a customer makes a phone booking for a double sized*

*bed and then receives a single sized bed, then the customer is not going to be happy at all; and this will ultimately impact negative on customer satisfaction towards service quality". Assurance is considered to be more important than other factors because employees need to assure their customers about all other aspects of quality service being offered by the hotels. Hence, if customer is not convinced with the quality of services or that the quality will be compromised, then it will likely have a negative impact on the service quality.*

The supervisors also indicated that assurance is the key factor in relation to all other factors in terms of offering high level of service quality in five-star hotels. The supervisors indicated that the manner in which the staff of a hotel interacts with the customers determines the quality of the services. *FOSI indicated that "we ensure that our subordinates interact with the customers and are ready to help them whenever they make requests". Assurance is also as human factor of service quality as it contributes to the high service quality standards. The supervisors indicated that all their employees are striving hard to give their customers the best possible service. For instance, the housekeeping department clears all the mess and removes the rubbish from the customers' rooms once they have checked out. The supervisors monitor all the activities done by the junior housekeeper in order to ensure consistency in the services.*

In order to fulfil the assurance factor, knowledge, skills and experience of workers working in the hotel is significant. The skills and experiences of the employees are significant in terms of delivering the best service quality. Assurance is therefore one of the main factors which comprises the skills of the employees and of an understanding of the needs of the customers. They are important since they ensure that the service quality is high; high service quality translates into more satisfied customers. It is not possible to achieve high service quality without first considering the various factors that could impact service quality.

For achieving that purpose, it is important to provide good training for employees on how to deliver the service and having a good workplace environment that helps them to do their best. This varies from one employee to another - like the more he/she grasps, the better he/she delivers. Also, it is important to know that not all the staff will provide the same service - some might be exceptionally good while others just average, such as just doing their duty. Also, it has been seen that motivation leads to best service, if the employees are highly motivated, their



service will be very good, on the other hand, lack of motivation will make them dull and not willing to perform their duty.

It is important to maintain each and every thing and provide best quality service in every department from staff who are trained to serve different kinds of people with ease. The non-manager employees further indicated that they try to be friendly with the guests and this leads them to know what guests are really expecting from them. Once knowing their needs, it becomes easier to satisfy them and provide them with best service quality. In order to ensure high levels of service quality, the hotels have to ensure that there are adequate resources both in terms of the products and items ordered by the customers as well as the manpower required to address the needs of the customers. The employees need to be trained on how to offer quality services to the guests.

There are various elements of the Assurance Factor which can contribute to high level service quality – these include daily mentoring of the staff, a motivational session before the beginning of the duty, and, appreciation shown by the management. The non-manager employees indicated that it is not things but the people who satisfy the customers. It is the non-manager staff who explain each and every thing to the customers; such staff are there to answer customer grievances and to provide them high levels of service. If the non-manager staff or the front-line staff do not behave properly with the customers, they will not be satisfied with the services. That is why motivation among employees is really important as it can play a huge role in hotels. *HR4 said “motivating the receptionist will force them to provide better service for guests and this leads to more customer satisfaction”*

Motivation makes the employees give of their best in whatever they are doing. *For instance, W2 indicated “if I am serving the food and I do not have a smile on customer’s face, it surely would lead to the customers feeling unwelcome and causing them to wonder what is wrong...”*. On the other hand, if the server is smiling, it will make the customers appreciate his work and his services. The dress and the way employees carry themselves also have an effect on the service quality - hence hotel employees need to be perfect in these areas. They have to ensure that they are smartly dressed in uniform. They should be courteous and speak to the guests in a friendly manner to make them feel welcome, and promptly respond to any requests that they make. While these are just a few of the aspects of the Assurance Factor, those just mentioned will determine

whether or not the guests are happy with services. The hotels make it clear that employees need to do whatever it takes in order to ensure that they offer high levels of service at all times. It is important that employees working at the hotel get the correct training and have the required skills to offer their customers the high level of service quality that they expect from a five-star hotel.

#### **4.6.3 Tangibles Required for Delivering High Service Quality**

Tangibles entail the physical features of the services and products that are being offered at the hotel. HR managers indicate that some of the aspects that are considered in their hotels for the achievement of high service quality are part of the tangibles – these are comprised of: appearance of the rooms, food, and even the staff working in the hotel. They also included the appearances of the physical facilities, the furniture, the equipment, personnel, and even how the hotel staff communicates with their customers. HR managers further indicated that tangibles symbolise the high level of service quality.

The hotel managers indicated that they ensure that the furniture in the hotel, appearance of employees, and even the ambience needs to resemble that of a five-star hotel and thus be of supreme quality. These are very important since it is vital that they are all of supreme quality. For example, *HR3 said “the furniture needs to be modern and in great condition”*. When it comes to the ambience of the hotel, it also has to be the ambience of a five-star hotel. *HR5 also said “The furniture needs to be in very good condition and the decor also needs to be that of a five-star hotel”*.

In terms of responsibilities, the junior staff know them very well. They are there to assist the customers in any circumstances. However, supervisors are also there to keep a check on each and every thing. In this regard, *HW1 indicated “we have to ask our staff what they did the whole day or how many total customers they served on that day. If there were some issues faced by them, then we asked as to how they resolved them or what their response was; and if the issue was of serious nature and went unreported, then the query would be as to why did they not inform us on time”*.

By keeping a check from time to time on how members of staff perform their duties, hotels find that the results are always in their favour. *HS2 indicated “we need to supervise the cleanliness of the rooms, toilet areas, the arranging of the flowers etc”*. which such duties being the preserve of the junior staff and sometimes they fell demotivated which leads to low service quality. In food and beverages sphere, for instance, personal presentation or presenting the food to the customers is very important. It is the duty of the waiters to first of all clean the serving tray, after that they have to put a serving cloth on it and after then they have to put the food on the clean tray.

The non-manager employees indicated that they also deal with the tangible services when catering to their guests by taking into consideration the region or country of the guest. For instance, *R4 indicated “if a customer is from India, the best service quality is provided in the food and beverages sphere; and if someone is from UK, the best service quality is provided by housekeeping”*. They further indicated that the hotel has to ensure that all the ingredients that are required in preparation of meals are available such that when a customer orders a meal, the meal can be prepared and served in a timely manner. The same applies in manpower since if only two waiters are employed to serve a lot of customers who will be coming to the hotel, the customers will have to wait for a long time to be serviced and that will definitely leave the customers being of the view that the services offered are of poor quality.

In addition, non-manager employees indicated that hotels are providing free Wi-Fi and movies along with some new state-of-the-art amenities. *For instance, R5 said “the hotel provides Japanese tea and coffee when the guests arrive at the hotel so that they can relax”*. Also, the guests are provided free mineral water in all guest room refrigerators. These amenities serve as a source of enhancing the service quality and makes the customers opt for the same hotel in the future. These kinds of customers give the hotel a good rating on the rating board which indicates to other guests that the hotel gives precedence to its guests. Some other amenities are gym and the swimming pool; these attract a lot of customers’ attention, but again, it is the staff who clean them and keep them in good condition ready to be used by the customers. The ambience of the hotel also needs to reflect the high quality that the hotel claims to offer. In the kitchen, the utensils used are regularly changed since the hotel always wants to ensure that the customers who are served feel that they are getting the best service quality that is available.

#### 4.6.4 Empathy of Hotel Staff in Understanding Customer Needs

Empathy involves that hotels and their employees are, in all ways, empathetic towards the needs of their customers. This means that if a customer is worried about something related to service or does not understand how to utilise the services, then the hotels and their employees should show their concern and come forward for assistance all the way. HR6, for instance, explained empathy as, *“Empathy involves that our employees should be caring and offering individualised attention to customers”*. The HR managers indicated that empathy needs to be shown to each and every customer - such being the hallmark of a five-star hotel. This shows the customers that the hotels care for them and that they are ready to do anything to ensure that customers have a wonderful experience with the hotels. The main aspects that determine the service quality comprises of understanding; it is crucial for the staff to understand their customers and their needs and ensure that they do their best in ensuring that the needs of the customers even exceed expectations.

Empathy is also related to reliability factor since empathy is all about showing the care towards the promise that hotels make to their guests for offering friendly services and as a result, the guests expect that all the hotel's staff are friendly. For instance, HC1, a housekeeper supervisor, indicated, *“Well, the experience that I have had over the years has shown me that if you cannot have a clear understanding of the needs of the customers, you are going to have very little chance of offering the customer a high level of service quality”*.

Another perspective of showing empathy is also related to understanding the needs and expectations of the customers. The five-star hotels can put various measures in place to ensure that customers actually feel that hotels are at least trying to understand their needs and expectations even when those expectations are not met sometimes. As a receptionist, R3 added, *“I think the most important factor is to understand what customers need. This was an important principle also in the sales function. So, first we should know what customers are looking for and make sure to satisfy all of these needs”*. It is also important to know what customers are internally (i.e. subjectively) expecting from hotels even when they sometimes do not express their needs and desires. For example, sometimes customers have low budgets and cannot say that. It is then the duty of hotels to understand it and make them feel comfortable by being able to provide anything within their budget. Similarly, sometimes customers want discounts and

offers, but do not express this for the reasons of self-respect. Therefore, five-star hotels must understand that and if they can, they must provide them with the best offers and deals which not only save their money but also make them very satisfied. This is one of the better ways of showing empathy towards the hotel customers.

Staff training in showing empathy towards hotel customers plays a significant role, and that is where HR plays a key role in ensuring that hotel employees are well-trained and show emotional intelligence when dealing with the customers. For instance, R5 mentioned *“we should express our empathy by considering the kind of person we are dealing with”*. R3 supported this by stating *“if we are dealing with a family with children, then we need to try to interact with the children and make them smile and this gesture can be highly appreciated by the parents who can rate the service quality as high”*. Similarly, R1 said *“if I am dealing with singles, then I should try my best to provide them what they are looking for, for example, singles may prefer quite room”*. Hence, one of the main components of empathy is understating customer needs and expectations. If staff of hotels do not have an understanding of what the customers need, it will be very hard for them and hotels to be able to meet the expectations of the customers.

#### **4.6.5 Responsiveness of Hotel Staff in Delivering Service in Quick Turnaround Time**

Responsiveness, as the name suggests, is the responsive behaviour towards the services required by the customers as well as addressing the complaints related to services. The HR managers indicated that five-star hotels must be able to minimise complains by predicting which can potentially make the customers upset or disappointed. For instance, the customer hates to wait too long to get their rooms allocated. Hence, the five-star hotels need to try to speed up the check-in process. Responsiveness is therefore paramount in that all hotel employees are willing and are ready to promptly attend to the needs and demands of the customers.

Customers in five-star hotels generally expect that the employees, with whom they interact, are highly trained and know how to interact with them in a courteous manner. This is again where HR can play a significant role in providing training and quality standards related to responsiveness behaviour of hotel staff. Responsiveness is synonymous with term receptiveness. For instance, HR4 indicated that, *“The main aspects that determine the service quality comprises of receptiveness. Our employees need to be receptive”*. In addition, responsiveness is also

sometimes synonymous with term approachability. For instance, HR5 indicated, *“The other factor entails approachability which means that our customers must be able to access our services at any time without any challenges”*.

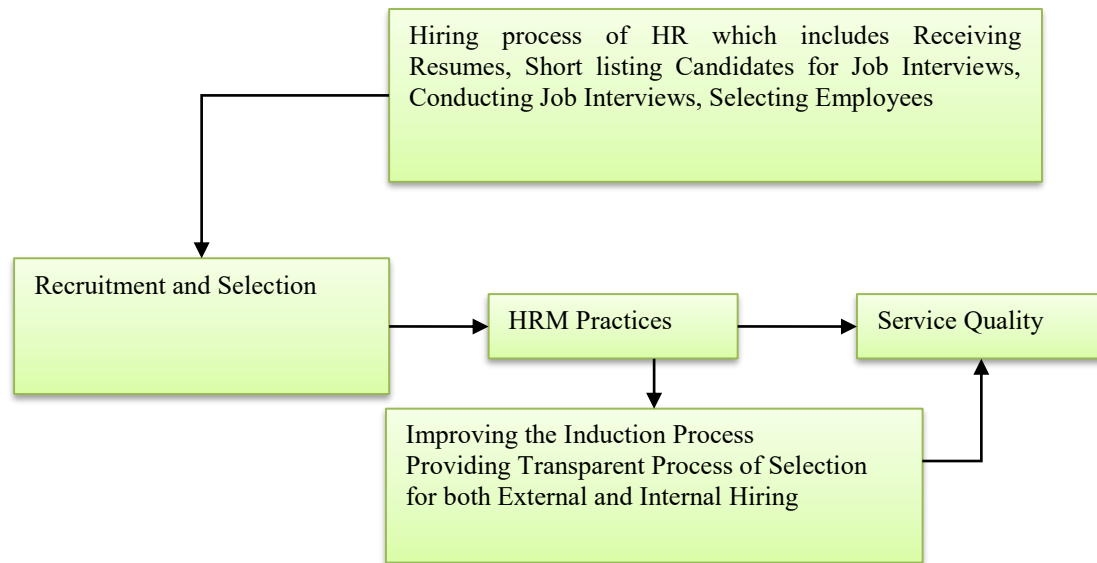
The responsiveness is therefore important for ensuring the service quality as it entails that hotel staff should be prepared to assist their customers and ensure that they are offered prompt services. This also means responding promptly to the specialised and personalised needs of the customer on time. For instance, if customers require baby food, the hotel staff needs to provide them with it within 10-15 minutes - and also the quality should be very high. Also, if customers call the staff from their rooms, then they have to attend their call in 10 bells maximum and then carefully listen to what they are saying. For waiters, it is also important to fulfil their duty with prompt responses. For instance, HW1 indicated, *“Being a head waiter it is my duty to manage the floor and look after each of the waiters present on the floor. If they are standing idle, then there is a posture for that, and they have to stand according to that standard. They are not allowed to sit at the tables, which are for guests only - even I can't sit at them.”*

In order to be able to respond promptly and quickly, the non-manager employees indicated that there should be the required number of persons to cater to the customers. Given the workload and shortage of staff, they will not be able manage their work effectively. For instance, as a receptionist, R1 indicated, *“When the hotel understands that the customers do not want to wait in the lobby and want to come in, check in, and within five minutes be in the room, the hotel will add more receptionists during the high season to ensure that the customers do not have to spend a lot of time in the lobby waiting to either check in or check out”*. By this way the five-star hotels can improve their response time and eventually improve the quality of their services.

#### **4.7 Theme Three: Relationship between Recruitment and Selection and Service Quality**

The purpose here is to assess how the three groups of employees describe recruitment and selection processes in their hotels and their relationship to service quality delivery. Figure 17 illustrates the relationship between recruitment and selection and service quality.

Figure 17: Relationship between Recruitment and Selection and Service Quality



Source: developed by the researcher

Figure 17 illustrates the relationship between recruitment and selection and service quality. Recruitment and selection is the most important HR practice for hotels as any mistake in this process can cost hotels not only money but time spent on recruiting the employee. HR is therefore very vigilant in this process and takes time for hiring the employees. They consider the options of both external and internal hiring for vacant positions. If an internal employee is experienced and has the required qualifications and skills and is also recommended by the department head or supervisor, then he/she is also considered for that new role. Both external and internal hiring is made but preference is given to one at times given the requirements at any particular moment. This process of HR includes receiving resumes, short-listing candidates for job interviews, conducting job interviews, and selecting employees. It is implied that there is positive and direct impact of recruitment and selection practice of HR on service quality of five-star hotels when HR improves their induction process and ensures transparent processes of selection for both external and internal hiring. The findings observed from this previous relationship are illustrated in Table 16. Three main sub themes were formulated and shall be discussed after.

Table 16: Relationship between Recruitment and Selection and Service Quality

What is Relationship of Recruitment and Selection and Service Quality	HR Managers	Supervisors	Non-manager Employees
Hiring process from interviews to induction in job duties	✓	✓	✓
Recruitment, selection and training help selection of skilled people to deliver service quality	✓	✓	✓
Both external and internal hiring is made but preference is given to one at times given the requirements	✓	✓	✓

#### 4.7.1 Hiring Process from Interviews to Induction in Job Duties

Regarding the predominant theme related to the relationship between recruitment and selection and service quality, the interviewees indicated that hiring processes from interviews to induction in job duties as the predominant factor. The HR managers indicated the process is quite elaborate. Actually, any applicant irrespective of the position has to be interviewed at least three times before a decision on the applicant who is going to be hired is made. Although three interviews are a lot, they indicated that they have realised that by having three interviews, they increase the chances of hiring the individual who is most suitably qualified for the task. In addition, the type of job determines the type of hiring process that we carry out. For example, the hiring process of a housekeeper is totally different to the hiring process of a marketing manager.

The supervisors also indicated that their hotel aims at attracting and retaining the best employees that are going to make it possible for the hotel to achieve its overall objectives. The policy of the hotel is to make sure that recruitment and selection decisions are specifically based on the aptitude of the applicant in meeting the requirements of the job description, person specification and any other relevant criteria. The non-manager employees indicated that the recruitment and selection process used by their hotels is fine since it mainly involves hiring from within the organisation as well as hiring from outside. When there is a waiter vacancy, the hotel advertises the vacancy on the website, social media, and even in local newspapers. Once the applications have been received, the HR team goes through the applications submitted and then shortlists the candidates that they believe are the ones who are most qualified for the vacancy. They are then



invited for the first interview. The HR staff together with the manager then shortlist the applicants that are considered as ideal for the position and invite them for a second interview. After the second interview, the ideal candidate is hired.

#### **4.7.2 Recruitment, Selection and Training Help Selection of Skilled People to Deliver Service Quality**

Another key theme was recruitment and selection helping in the selection of skilled people to deliver service quality. The HR managers indicated that the recruitment and selection is the first step in the HR process. If they attract people to apply for the opening positions, they will have a better chance of selecting the best of them – i.e. those who have the skills to provide good service quality. This will reduce the training cost at a later stage. The supervisors and non-manager employees also indicated that when employees hired are the ones that are the most qualified and have the skills and competencies required, they are then sure that they are going to offer high quality service as they are considered as having the knowhow and skills needed to offer high quality service. However, if an employee does not have the skills required, the employee will offer poor service quality - and that is not going to be good for the company.

#### **4.7.3 Both External and Internal Hiring is Made but Preference is given to One, Given the Requirements at any Particular Time**

Another key theme was both external and internal hiring, preference being given to one or the other depending upon staffing requirements at any particular time. The HR managers stated that generally, they hire from both internal and external sources even when hiring for management positions. They mainly hire from external sources due to the fact that they have found it to be more beneficial as the individual hired from the outside will come with new ideas and concepts that the hotel might not have had if it had hired from within. Nevertheless, they always try to ensure that they get a good balance between hiring from internal and hiring from external sources.

The supervisors indicated that the recruitment and selection processes at their hotels are quite detailed since the HR department wants to ensure that all the employees who are hired have the

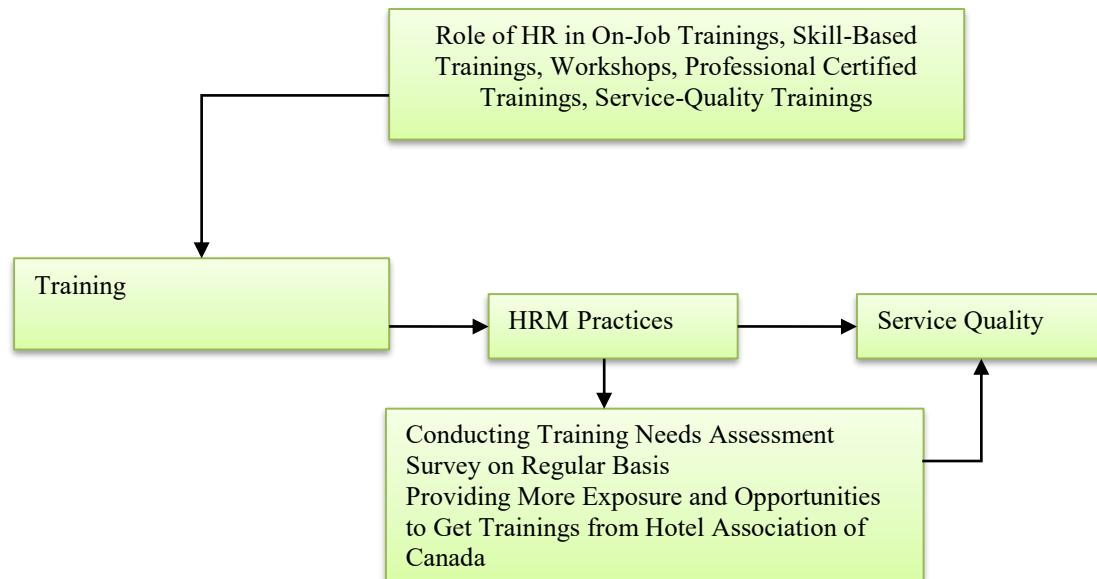
skills and other competencies required in offering high quality services and doing a good job for the company. The hotel always tries to hire internally and where not possible, it then embarks on hiring employees from outside. The recruitment processes for the low-level employees is normally easier than that of the management employees, since for low level employees, applicants can only take part in one interview, while on the other hand, the applicants for management positions have to take part in a number of interviews before the hotel can make a decision on the employee that they are going to hire.

The non-manager employees indicated that the human resources people are the ones who are responsible for recruitment and selection at the hotel even though they normally involve the managers and supervisors of the various departments since they want to ensure that they end up hiring a person who will have the skills needed. The hotel can hire from inside or outside even though the hotel tends to hire from the outside only when it cannot fill the position from the inside.

#### **4.8 Theme Four: Relationship between Training, Development and Service Quality**

The purpose here is to assess training provided to three groups of employees and how such training helps them in delivering service quality. The following figure illustrates the relationship between training and service quality.

Figure 18: Relationship between Training and Service Quality



Source: developed by the researcher

Figure 18 illustrates the relationship between training and service quality. Training plays an important role in the efficiency and effectiveness of hotel employees in delivering quality of service. The investment in employees training and development will allow employees to not only shift away from the traditional methods used to address guests' needs but also to a more personalised approach that allows employees to make appropriate decisions on their own to fulfil guests needs. The practical approach is thinking outside the box, which allows employees to respond more effectively and on a more personal basis so as to ensure quality service and complete customer satisfaction. The concept was explicitly relevant bearing in mind the unique nature of the hotel industry, where continuous quality service through employees was considered paramount. HR plays the key role in planning and facilitating on-job training, skill-based training, workshops, professionally certified training, and service quality training for hotel employees that could improve their delivery of service quality. Accordingly, HR should conduct training needs assessment surveys on a regular basis so as to identify the important areas where employees should be given the training. They also need to provide more opportunities to employees to get training from professional bodies like the Hotel Association of Canada. These

activities of HR related to training have a positive impact on service quality. The findings observed from this question are illustrated in Table 17.

Table 17: Relationship between Training and Service Quality

What is Relationship of Training and Service Quality	HR Managers	Supervisors	Non-manager Employees
On -job skills training	✓	✓	✓
Training of various skills help in achieving the desired service quality	✓	✓	✓

Table 17 shows the analysis regarding the impact of training on service quality. Each group of interviewees have indicated their responses on the impact of training on service quality. These themes are illustrated and discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### 4.8.1 On-Job Skills Training

Regarding the predominant theme related to the relationship between training and service quality, the interviewees indicated on job skills training as being the predominant factor. Employee training generally leads to higher levels of employee satisfaction, and has a positive effect on service quality (Chang et al., 2010).

The HR managers indicated that the sector in which they operate in keeps changing on a regular basis, and for that reason, it is crucial that employees are trained on a regular basis. Therefore, their hotel always organises training sessions for all its employees.

Supervisors indicated that according to hotel standards, all management level staff have to be given a minimum of three months of training for their respective positions. But if they learn slowly, the training period is extended - even for a six-month period. Basically, this has to be done in order to ensure that quality service is provided to the customers.

According to the non-manager employees, training was the most difficult thing that he experienced in his career. For instance, W5 indicated “*About training, I can say that it is one of the most difficult things present in this hotel. Also, I didn’t like it when I joined this hotel as I was deprived of my rewards and incentives. But later on, I realised that it was for our benefit and*

*also it trained us to be a perfect employee for this hotel*". The non-manager employees reported that training is normally carried out in the hotel by the managers; for the managers; they regularly take part in external training. Normally, the arrangement is that once the managers have been trained, they can then train the employees that they lead. The HRM of the hotels also encourages employees to enhance their skills by enrolling for various courses such as diplomas and even degrees. For instance, one of the HR staff who was initially employed as a receptionist was promoted to HR admin after she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in HR.

#### **4.8.2 Training of Various Skills Help in Achieving the Desired Service Quality**

Regarding the second predominant theme related to the relationship between training and service quality, the interviewees indicated that training in various skills helped them in achieving the desired service quality and elevated it to being the predominant factor. *HR4 indicated "if employees have been trained in the various skills required to execute various roles, the employees are definitely going to be in a better position to execute the roles exceptionally well"*. Thus, the training that they offer is closely related to the service quality. For example, *HC1 said "when a new meal is introduced in the menu, all the cooks have to be trained on how to prepare the new meal since failure to do that will result to the cooks not being aware of how they are supposed to prepare the new meal"*. Therefore, without the constant trainings that go on at the hotel, it would not be possible for them to constantly offer their customers high quality services. Hence, training is the most important way to achieve the desired level of service quality.

The supervisors also admitted that without proper training, service quality would not be enhanced - and that was the reason why they did not take training for granted.

The non-manager employees also agreed that training in any field had a direct relation with regard to improving quality of services. Due to the digital revolution, there have been lots of changes in every sector over the years. For instance, in some hotels, customers were no longer given traditional menu cards. Menus are written on tablets, while bills and orders are generated on tablets so as to quicken the work process and also improve the quality of service. In this regard, *W5 mentioned, "our hotel recently brought a high technology that allows customers to order and customise their meal online using tablets but we still have to get training on this*

*technology to help and support customers*”. Therefore, training with regard to these changes is important so that the workers can adapt to the new technology and give better quality service.

#### **4.9 Theme Five: Relationship between Incentives and Rewards and Service Quality**

Incentives and Rewards play an important role in job satisfaction, job motivation, employee-relations, employee loyalty and job involvement. HR plays a key role in improving employee-relations, job motivation, job satisfaction, employee performance systems, employee rewards and incentives, employee recognition. The results of interviews imply that improving the performance management system, giving regular recognition publicly, bonuses for top performers, recognition of contributors as HR practices related to incentives and rewards, have positive impact on service quality. The main findings are illustrated in the following table.

Table 18: Relationship between Incentives and Rewards and Service Quality

<b>What is Relationship of Incentives and Rewards and Service Quality</b>	<b>HR Managers</b>	<b>Supervisors</b>	<b>Non-manager Employees</b>
Incentives and rewards motivate employees to perform high standards in service quality	✓	✓	✓
Monetary and non-monetary incentives and rewards are given to enhance job satisfaction and employee motivation	✓	✓	✓

The detailed responses of all interviewees regarding the impact of incentives and rewards on service quality will be highlighted in the following section.

##### **4.9.1 Incentives and Rewards Motivate Employees to Provide High Standards in Service Quality**

Regarding the predominant theme related to the relationship between incentives and rewards and service quality, the interviewees indicated that incentives and rewards are the predominant factors in motivating employees to provide high standards in service quality.

The HR managers indicted that the relationship between incentives, motivation, and quality of the service is that the incentives offered makes the employees be more motivated, as when they

are motivated, they will actually do their best in offering the hotels' customers the best service quality. Consequently, if hotels want their employees to offer high level services, then hotels need to ensure that their employees are motivated - and incentives are some of the ways to enhance employee motivation.

The supervisors also indicated that there are incentives for them which makes them happy, as that makes them feel motivated to do their best in offering the best service quality that they can. The incentives make them feel as if they are part of the hotel, and once they have that feeling, they will go to great lengths in providing high service quality – thus leading to the hotel's success. The non-manager employees also indicated that they receive rewards and incentives from time to time and in huge quantity and quality. Some of these benefits are free accommodation and free food which makes them work even harder and follow the standards in order to please the management and obviously the customers by providing them high service quality.

#### **4.9.2 Monetary and Non-Monetary Incentives and Rewards are Given to Enhance Job Satisfaction and Employee Motivation**

The interviewees indicated that monetary and non-monetary incentives and rewards are given to enhance job satisfaction and employee motivation as these are the predominant factors involved in achieving such motivation. The HR managers indicated that they always try to ensure that all their employees are motivated since they are aware of the fact that without employee motivation, it would be a challenge for the employees to offer high quality services to the hotels' clients. Therefore, there are various incentives that they offer to the low-level employees. First, they offer them better pay than what other hotels offer. Apart from that they also offer them overtime pay which they like as it helps them earn more.

Apart from that, all the non-manager staff who are employed on a full time basis get 30-days paid holiday and also get health insurance and dental cover. They want to show all their employees that their organisation values them, and, through such incentives, they get to see that their organisation actually does value them and considers them to be part of the company. The supervisors also indicated that the incentives offered are ideal since they entail monetary and non-monetary incentives. *FOSI indicated "our hotel provide one of the best pay packages that*

*cannot even be compared with what most of the other hotels offer*". Also, *HSI said "the quality and quantity of food provided to us by the hotel is very health and tasty too"*. The non-manager employees' rewards differ from section to section. For example, the housekeeping department receives something different in comparison to the kitchen department, which in turn is different to that given to those working at the front office. Some employees receive regular monetary benefits, paid holidays, insurance, accommodation, food and travelling. Incentives like these are very important in motivating the employees to work harder and go that extra mile in order to fulfil their duties.

Results indicate that if employees perceive lots of benefits and facilities in their jobs designed by HRM, such benefits will ultimately influence their capacity to deliver quality services. The benefits here include all those benefits, perks and facilities which are provided generally to all employees in the organisation as well as those which are provided to employees in relation to their position in the organisational hierarchy. The identification of benefits of working in hotel organisations helps in illustrating the relationship between HRM practices and service quality. Given that reasons and benefits and job motivation come under the domain of HR management, it is highly important that HR should strive to enhance intrinsic and extrinsic motivators of employees to enhance the service quality behaviour. It was implied that motivated employees, who perceive greater numbers of benefits or positive reasons for working with five-star hotels, tend to deliver higher service quality - as highlighted in the following table.

Table 19: The relationship between motivation and service quality

<b>Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivators</b>	<b>HR Managers</b>	<b>Supervisors</b>	<b>Non-manager Employees</b>
<b>Intrinsic Motivators</b>			
Opportunity for Advancement to Career	✓	✓	✓
Feeling Proud or Privilege to Work for 5-Star Hotel or Industry	✓	✓	✓
Conducive Work Environment	✓	✓	✓
Loyalty with Organisation		✓	✓
Professional Development	✓		✓



Reputation of Organisation		✓	✓
Feeling Valued at Work	✓		✓
Recognition		✓	✓
Job Security	✓	✓	
Job Satisfaction		✓	✓
Motivation at Work	✓		
<b>Extrinsic Motivators</b>			
Attractive Pay or Salary or Compensation	✓	✓	✓
Better Benefits than Competitors	✓	✓	✓
Subsidised Meals or Food	✓		✓
Health Insurance and Other Health Related Benefits	✓		
Allocation of Long Paid Annual Leaves	✓		
Long-Term Benefits	✓		
Loan Facilities	✓		

Table 19 illustrated the thematic analysis of reasons or benefits for working in hotel organisations and its relation to service quality. The Nvivo analysis resulted in different themes/nodes from this question. Each group of interviewees have indicated different reasons or benefits of working in their respective organisations as well as in the hotel industry. Some themes are more frequent than others indicating that all three groups of interviewees receive benefits or indicate the same reasons for working in their current organisation. The most repeated themes across three groups of interviewees are: attractive pay or salary or compensation; opportunity for advancement in their respective careers; feeling proud or privileged to work for a five-star hotel or industry; better benefits than competitors; and a conducive work environment. These benefits or reasons of working in hotel organisations serve as the motivation for the employees to work in their organisations and can be categorised into Herzberg's intrinsic/extrinsic factors of motivation (Putra et al., 2017). Motivation can be described with

intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors based on self-determination theory (Brown and Ryan, 2015).

#### **4.9.2.1 Intrinsic Motivators**

The interviewees highlighted various intrinsic motivators related to working in five-star hotel organisations in Canada. Opportunity for career advancement is one of the intrinsic motivators which is highlighted by all three groups of employees. Four out of six HR managers indicated that the benefit of opportunity for career advancement being provided was one of the major reasons for working in their respective hotel organisations. They suggested their organisations provide different opportunities to their employees throughout their careers to move up the ladder of their careers. For instance, HR3 indicated, *“If you are looking for work after your graduation, you might consider applying to work with us. You never know.....You could end up being our employee.”*

The supervisors also indicated that they found opportunity of career advancement when they want to switch their employers and also in the later stages of their careers when they are looking for the promotions. Four out of six supervisors mentioned the following related to opportunity to career advancement. For instance, FOS1 indicated, *“...the hotel offered me the chance to grow professionally since I was hired as a front office supervisor which to me was a development in my career as I am now in charge of a team, while in the past, I was never a supervisor”*. Similarly, HS2 indicated, *“I joined here as a housekeeper with low salary and benefits but I always knew that there were promotions each year, and that if I could work hard or follow the standards, I could be easily promoted to a supervisory position”*.

The group of interviewees from non-manager employees also indicated opportunity to career advancement as the major reason for working in their current hotels. Generally, there is common pattern in the responses of non-managers regarding career advancement in terms of when they were looking for their first job as well as when they were looking to change their previous employer. Twelve out of 22 non-manager employees mentioned the following related to opportunity for career advancement. For instance, C1 indicated, *“Since I was a child, I have always wanted to be a cook. Upon completion of my studies, at a local cookery school, I*

*submitted a job application and got hired here.*” Advancement to career is found to be one of the important intrinsic motivators in five-star hotels in Canada.

Feeling proud or privileged to work for a five-Star hotel or industry is also an important intrinsic motivator for employees working in a five-star hotel establishment in Canada. All six HR managers indicated that having the feeling of working in a five-star hotel is itself one of the major reasons or benefits which their employees consider when working for their organisations. This is suggested when an employee, who previously worked for 3-star or 4-star hotels, feel privileged and proud to work for large-scale hotels. This also gives importance to their resumes and their career advancement. For instance, HR1 indicated, *“Our hotel is a five-star hotel and you should be able to receive various types of benefits...”* Similarly, HR4 indicated, *“The main benefit of working in our hotel is that you will be working for a five star hotel so, everything will be five-star. So, you will be privileged to work with us and we are certain that you will love it.”* HR5 believes, *“You will be working for a five-star hotel. If you are not aware of what that means, it means that you will be working for a hotel that has been classified as being among the best hotels”*.

A few supervisors also mentioned in their answers that they feel proud and fortunate to be working in a five-star hotel. For instance, FOS2 indicated, *“I always wanted to work in a five-star hotel and in some senior position.”* In addition, HW1 indicated, *“So, when I learnt about the vacancy, I submitted my application and was fortunate to get hired.”* Eleven non-manager employees also indicated that one of the main reasons for working in their current organisation was because they always wanted to work in a five-star hotel and that they feel privileged to have obtained employment in the five-star hotel industry. For instance, R1 indicated, *“Moreover, the chance to work for a five-star hotel that had been newly opened was appealing to me”*. Similarly, R2 indicated, *“[I]...was fortunate to get a job with a five-star hotel”*. Also, W1 mentioned, *“The main reason why I opted to work for the specific hotel that I work for is that it has a five- star restaurant.”* C2 also mentioned similar thoughts, *“I have always dreamt of working in a five star hotel and was so pleased when offered a job here.”* Feeling pride in joining an organisation is one of the main factors for an employee in delivering the high standards of their assigned duties. These findings are also found in the previous studies of Kensbock et al. (2013).

Conducive and safe working environments is another major intrinsic motivator of the employees of five-star hotels in Canada. HRM policies may play an important role in improving organisational performance by creating a positive internal work environment. Specifically, HRM policies may directly influence organisational performance through selection of the right employees, involving employees in decision making, and adopting a flexible work design - thus, achieving high organisational efficiency, improved quality, and increased customer satisfaction (Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007).

The HR managers cited that they provide conducive working environments to all their employees. For instance, HR1 indicated, *“Some of the benefits that you would receive... a conducive work environment...”* HR also mentioned, *“You therefore have to expect the best working environment that you can get when working in a hotel.”* HR 3 also cited, *“...you can expect to receive... a very good working environment.”* For supervisors and non-manager employees, a conducive working environment was also an important motivator. HW1 indicated, *“I cannot regret leaving my previous employers since as the working environment here is far much better than the working environment of the previous hotel”*. Similarly, R1 indicated, *“...I was sure that the working environment was going to be better compared to a three-star hotel working environment.”* W1 also mentioned, *“...it offered better working conditions as well as the working environment.”*

Some other interrelated, but important, intrinsic motivators were: loyalty to the organisation, professional development, reputation of the organisation, feeling valued at work, recognition, job security, job satisfaction, and motivation at work. All these themes are interrelated with the top three intrinsic motivators: opportunity for career advancement, feeling proud or privileged to work for a five-star hotel, and a conducive work environment. Loyalty to the organisation, or, employee commitment, is an important intrinsic motivator. It is defined as employee loyalty and involvement in and desire to accept organisational values on behalf of the organisation (Nadeem, 2010). It includes the emotional responses that employees have towards their organisations. Employee commitment is very important to the success of organisations especially in the service sector.

#### 4.9.2.2 Extrinsic Motivators

Extrinsic motivators are prompted by rewards, or external factors. Attractive pay or salary or compensation are among the common motivators associated with extrinsic motivation. All 6 HR managers mentioned in their interviews that they offer attractive pay and salaries to their employees as being among the benefits. For instance, HR1 indicated, *“Some of the benefits that you would receive if you join our management team are comprised of; attractive salary...”* Similarly, HR4 indicated, *“...the pay will be better than what you could get working for other hotels...”* In addition, 5 out of 6 Supervisors mentioned this as the prime reason for working in their current organisations. For instance, FOS2 indicated, *“...I was selected here as a front office supervisor with double the salary that I was being paid earlier”*. HW1 mentioned, *“The terms of employment here and the salary and other benefits that were offered here were much better...”* Moreover, HC1 mentioned, *“the pay is far much better. Actually, there is a difference of almost \$4500 a year when the salary that I was paid by my former employer is compared to the salary that I get paid nowadays.”* Apart from those in management positions, 6 out of 22 non-manager employees also mentioned this as the prime reason for working in their current organisations. For instance, R1 indicated, *“I applied, since the salary on offer was better than what my previous employer used to offer me.”* R5 mentioned, *“I choose to work in this hotel because of the salary. I want to continue in this hotel because with this salary I am able to support my family and manage my expenses.”* Moreover, W1 indicated, *“The pay here is far much better than what I used to get in a three-star hotel where I worked as a waiter.”*

Better benefits than competitors are another important extrinsic motivator which is related with additional monetary benefits received by an employee from the employer. It is documented that extrinsically motivated employees leave their employers as soon as they find good monetary benefits from the competitors of their current employers (Putra et al., 2017). Hence, the majority of the interviewees described their main reason for working for their current hotel organisations was because they received better benefits than what their competitors offered. For instance, HR1 indicated, *“we offer better than what other hotels offer”*.

Among supervisors, FS1 indicated, *“The other reason is that the benefits that were on offer here were much better while compared to what my previous employer offered.”* Among non-manager employees, R1 indicated, *“I applied since the salary on offer was better than what my previous*

*employer used to offer me*”. Some of the other interrelated extrinsic motivators were: subsidised meals or food, health insurance and other health related benefits, allocation of long paid annual leaves, long-term benefits, and loan facilities. While these benefits are generally highlighted by the HR managers - that they do provide these benefits to their employees, the supervisors and non-manager employees do not signify these as the major reasons or benefits of working in their current organisations. Moreover, it could be possible that they perceive that such benefits exist in their organisations as some of these benefits are provided only to top executives and owners in the hotel organisations.

#### 4.10 Theme Six: Relationship between Promotion System and Service Quality

It is implied that improving performance and promotion systems can have a positive impact on service quality. The findings observed are illustrated in the following table.

Table 20: Relationship between Promotion System and Service Quality

What is Relationship between Promotion System and Service Quality	HR Managers	Supervisors	Non-manager Employees
Performance reviews based promotions	✓	✓	✓
Non-performance reviews based promotions		✓	✓
Existing promotion system motivates employees to perform high standards of service quality	✓	✓	✓
Existing promotion system demotivates employees to perform high standards of service quality		✓	✓

Table 20 shows the thematic analysis regarding the impact of promotion systems on service quality. Each group of interviewees have indicated their responses on what the impact of promotion system and service quality is. These themes are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

#### **4.10.1 Existing Promotion Systems Motivate Employees to Provide High Standards of Service Quality**

Most of the interviewees indicated that performance review based promotion is provided by their hotels against 18 interviewees who indicated that non-performance reviews based promotions are provided. These could be some interviewees who mentioned that both performance and non-performance based promotions are provided by the hotel management, but, their representation would be less. Further, around 18 interviewees indicated that existing promotion systems motivate employees to provide high standards of service quality as the major theme. HR managers indicated that all employees know that their performance plays a major role in determining their promotion. Therefore, employees always strive to ensure that they offer the best service, since by doing so, they will be enhancing their promotion chances.

The supervisors also indicated that the hotels offering their employees promotion opportunities implies that the employees are always doing their best in ensuring that they offer the best service quality that they can, since by doing so, they know that they will be increasing their chances of being promoted. Promotion enhances service quality over the years. If employees feel that they have some chances of being promoted in the future, they are likely to do their best since they want to impress the managers as well as the customers and so ensure that they end up being promoted. The non-manager employees also indicated that if they are performing well and working according to the standards, then management surely rewards them for their efforts and they appraise them according to their skills. If someone is hard working person, then he will likely get the rewards and recognition no matter what the market conditions are.

#### **4.10.2 Existing Promotion Systems Demotivate Employees in Providing High Standards of Service Quality**

Around 13 interviewees indicated that existing promotion systems demotivate employees from performing high standards of service quality. The majority of these interviewees were non-manager employees. The supervisors indicted that the existing promotion systems affect service quality negatively since when one feels that one's promotion opportunity has been awarded to someone else, one is less likely to give of one's best for the hotel. The non-manager employees further elaborated this scenario by indicating that the favouritism shown to some employees

when it comes to promotion affects the morale of the employees and that definitely impacts the quality of the services offered.

Some other non-manager employees indicated that existing promotion systems are not transparent and they do not get to know the criteria for promoting certain employees. All these things make them feel demotivated and they no longer want to give their best and so fail to operate according to the standards as laid down. Some other employees indicated that there is too much hard work, dedication, and overtime required for receiving promotion and salary hikes from the existing promotion system. For instance, H5 indicated, *“See I know each and every thing about promotion and salary but the thing is that there is too much hard work required in this field. I want a desk job. Maybe if they can make me a receptionist, then I could continue to work for them. Or, if they put me in charge of the front office, that would make me happy. But I don’t want to work here anymore. I am just waiting for my contract to finish so that I can leave this job and start working somewhere else”*. Therefore, employee incentives are key determinants of service quality - and this view is in agreement with Jin and Huang (2014).

#### **4.11 Theme Seven: Interaction of Different HR Practices and Their Relationship with Service Quality**

The purpose was to assess how HR managers describe the interaction of different HR practices (selection and recruitment, training and development, rewards and incentives, and internal career opportunity) and their relationship with service quality in hotels. Following are the two major outcomes resulting from the interviewees.

##### **4.11.1 Balancing the HR Practices Helps in Correct Recruitment and Induction as well as Enhancing Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Retention etc.**

HR managers indicated that balancing the HR practices can help them in correct recruitment and induction as well as enhancing motivation, job satisfaction, retention and the like. They indicated that when coming up with various HR practices, there are various things that are taken into consideration. The policies are not considered in aggregate here. When the policies are developed, the HRM balances HR practices by getting the best employees, ensuring that they are



retained for the longest time possible, and at the same time offering them the best working conditions as well as a remuneration package that makes them motivated. They further indicated that no aspect of HR practices is isolated from another. For instance, Payroll cannot be isolated from another aspect, such as employee skills, since the skills and experience of the employee determines the salary that the hotel offers the employee.

One of the managers said *“well, in order for the employees of the hotel to be able to offer high service quality, they need to have the required skills and competencies to do so and also to be highly motivated. So, when the hotel develops effective HR practices, the high service quality that the hotel always aims to offer will be guaranteed at almost all times”* (HR5).

It is important for HR to enable HR practices to directly impact service quality by strengthening some factors such as motivators, meaning/value association of service quality of employees, service quality determinants, service quality standards, behaviours and attitudes, employees' experiences of service quality, clear job description and proper job rotation. Without the interaction of each of these core practices with supporting HR practices, it would be difficult to get the desired results directly from HR core practices in service quality outcomes.

Another example was highlighted by (HR6) was when recruiting employees; the HR needs to consider the skills of the employee as well as the salary expectations of the employee. The HR cannot recruit the employee and then start considering the skills and the salary to be paid to the employee. Another example could be when the filling of a vacant position is determined by the type of skills and competencies needed to fill the position. On the other hand, the skills and experiences of the hired individual determines the trainings to be arranged for him. So, these things are closely connected and cannot be separated. Hence, these HR practices are all interconnected to some extent and cannot be separated. It is just not possible to separate them since that would not work - as confirmed by (HR2). For example, the skills and experience of an employee determines the salary to be offered. You cannot offer an employee a salary and other benefits without having an understanding of what the employee can offer.

#### **4.11.2 Balancing the HR Practices in Aggregate Ensures Effective Human Resource Management which Ultimately Impacts Service Quality**

The HR managers indicated that balancing the HR practices in aggregate ensures effective human resource management which ultimately impacts service quality. HR2 and HR6 indicated that the HR practices are considered in aggregate, and at times, individually. They further said HR practices are intended to ensure that the human resources are effectively managed and from that perspective, it is clear that they have a major impact on the quality of the service, for if they are not effective, it will be hard for employees to be motivated - and that will eventually have a negative impact on the quality of the service offered. The practices are directly related to service quality and cannot be isolated from it.

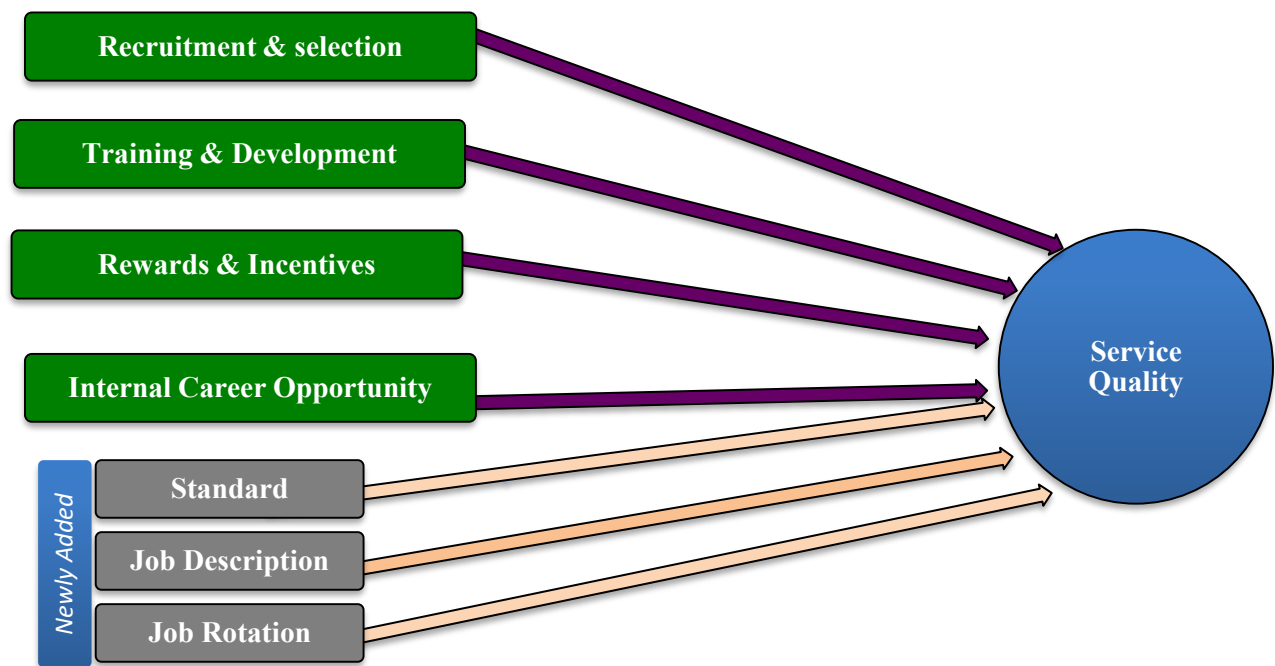
The various HR policies work together and are closely linked with one another. It would be impossible to separate them. In order for the employees of the hotel to be able to offer high service quality, they need to have the required skills and competencies to do so and also be highly motivated. *“when the hotel develops effective HR practices for the high service quality that the hotel always aims to offer, such high service quality will be guaranteed at almost all times”* (HR4). The aggregate policies are closely related to the service quality since better HR policies are going to improve employee motivation which will eventually have a positive impact on the service quality.

In view of these previous findings, the conceptual framework shall be revised in the following section.

#### **4.12 The Revised Model for the Relationship between HR Practices and Service Quality**

Initially, this research has shown that there are many common themes or approaches in developing the final conceptual model (Figure 19). To find out more about the resulting themes that constitute the model constructs, the next section will talk about every theme and how it was approached and modified.

Figure 19 The final conceptual model



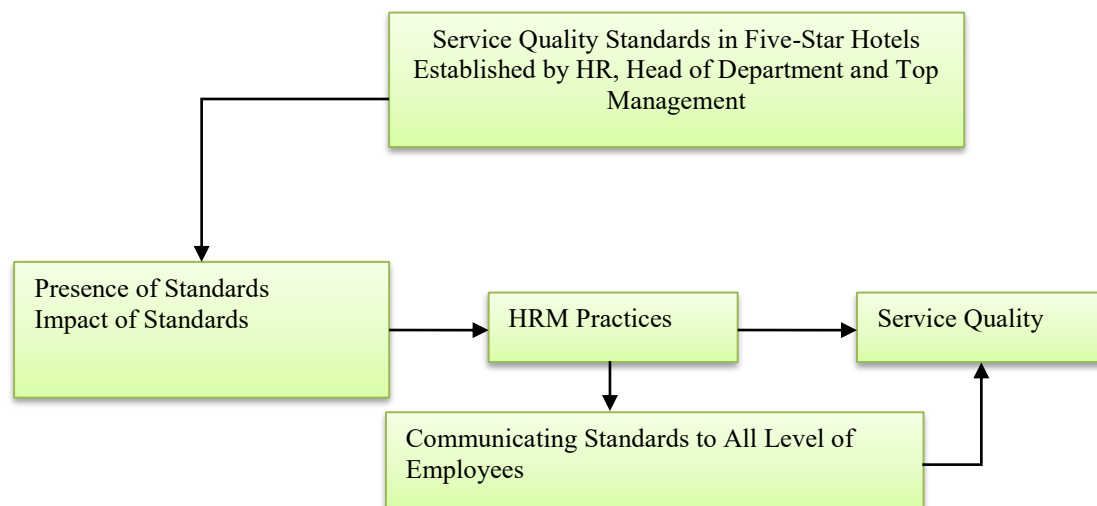
Source: developed by the researcher

Comparing to the primary conceptual framework (see chapter 2 figure 9), the interviews resulted in amending the primary conceptual framework by adding three more themes. These new themes are standards, job description and job rotation as appears in the green boxes of Figure 19. These themes shall be discussed in the following sections (4.12.1 till 4.12.3).

#### 4.12.1 The Role of Standards for Applying Service Quality

Understanding standards followed for applying service quality helps in illustrating the relationship between HRM practices and service quality. The following figure was derived from the managers' viewpoints with regard to the relationship between standards followed for applying service quality, HRM practices, and service quality.

Figure 20 Relationship between Standards Followed for Applying Service Quality, HRM Practices, and Service Quality



Source: developed by the researcher

Figure 20 illustrates how specific service standards followed by employees can act as links between the HRM practices and service quality. These standards are generally established by each department of the hotel separately after the approval of the top management. However, in hotel organisations, where HR is an important department, the standards are established mutually by top management, heads of departments and HR leaders. The communication of service quality standards plays a significant role here - and it should do so at all hierarchical levels. Hence, HR leaders need to collaborate with top management and heads of departments to communicate service quality standards to all levels of employees throughout the five-star hotel organisation. It was also revealed that improving the communication of service quality standards

among employees at all hierarchical levels positively impacts on service quality. The findings emphasised the importance of standards - as follows (See Table 21)

Table 21: Specific Standards Followed for Applying Service Quality

Are there standards followed for applying service quality and whether they are important	HR Managers	Supervisors	Non-manager Employees
Develop and Maintain Quality Standards is Prime Function of Each Department to Ensure Service Quality	✓	✓	✓
No or Few Quality Standards Followed		✓	✓
Quality Standards Provide Direction for Achieving High Service Quality	✓	✓	✓
New Employees' Induction and Training	✓		✓
Ensuring Everyone in Team Following Specified Quality Standards		✓	✓
Keeping Regular Checks on Quality Via Written Records		✓	✓
ISO Certifications	✓		
Consequences of Not Following Quality Standards		✓	✓
Separate Quality Control Department	✓		

Table 21 shows the thematic analysis regarding the specific quality standards followed by employees in five-star hotels. The NVIVO analysis resulted in different themes/nodes from this question. Each group of interviewees have indicated their responses on which service standards are being followed and whether these service standards impact their behaviour and delivery of the high-quality service.

#### **4.12.1.1      Developing and Maintaining Quality Standards is the Prime Function of Each Department in Ensuring Service Quality**

Developing and maintaining quality standards is the prime function of each department in ensuring service quality. The HR managers, in this regard, indicated that every department set their own quality standards. These standards are mutually approved by the higher management and heads of the departments. For example, the front office managers at the front office department have to ensure that the receptionists are trained on how they are supposed to interact with the customers and so ensure that they feel welcome. Likewise, the housekeeping department has its own quality standards that all the housekeepers have to comply with. Indeed, once a housekeeper has cleaned a room, the housekeeper has to actually sign his/her name in the worksheet to confirm that all quality standards have been followed and adhered to.

Even in the HR department, there are specific quality standards that have to be complied with. The HR managers indicated that once quality standards are set for every department, they need to be strictly followed by all the employees working for the hotel. In the past, there was some leeway when it came to complying with quality standards. However, that is no longer the case. The HR managers indicated that every head of department in the hotels are now required to ensure that the specified quality standards are complied with in every department. For instance, HR4 indicated that, *“We have quality standards that are strictly followed with by all our employees.”*

Similarly, HR5 indicated, *“We always strictly follow various quality standards for each department. For example, the kitchen department has a quality standard that they comply with while the housekeeping department also has a quality stand that they are expected to follow at all times.”* Given the status of five-star hotels, many HR managers were in favour of establishing the quality standards for each department. For instance, HR6 indicated, *“We are a five-star hotel and have developed quality standards that each employee working for us has to follow at all times. So, we very much follow specific quality standards at our hotel.”*

The supervisors are also in the favour of standards being followed in the five-star hotels. For instance, as head cook, HC1 indicated, *“For the staff working in the kitchen, we have to strictly follow the specified standards when applying high quality service.”* Therefore, all the people who work in the kitchen with head cooks should be trained on the various quality standards by HR,

and they are expected to follow them very strictly. For example, the head cooks demand that everyone working in the kitchen regularly clean his/her hand. In addition, other quality standards that have to be complied with consist in checking that all ingredients have not exceeded their expiry dates for their safe consumption, while any items that are put in the refrigerator are clearly labelled. Food poisoning is mainly caused by very small things and so five-star hotels cannot really afford in any way to have food poisoning in the hotel.

The non-manager employees also agreed that they were following specific standards set by the departments. For instance, as receptionist, R1 indicated, *“In my current workplace, there are specific standards that have to be followed by the employees working in various departments”*. In addition, some departments in the hotel have to fully comply with various health standards even when there are no specific quality standards. For example, the cooks have certain standards that they cannot compromise on, while the housekeepers also have quality standards that they need to stick to.

For receptionists, they need to be professionally trained on what they need to always do when interacting with the customers in order to ensure that they offer high service quality. For instance, R3 indicated, *“The hotel sets some policies and rules that we should follow in order to have high service quality. For example, when we check in the guest we should follow certain procedures by asking some important questions that help in understanding what the guest needs, and so, be enabled to fulfil these needs. This can be related to the type of room or the service that the guest would like to use.”* These standards need to be followed at any point of time during the day. Some other standards for receptionists include their not being permitted to stand at the customer’s side of the counter; they cannot use their mobile phones at the counter; the counter cannot be left unmanned at any point of time and there has to be at least one person available to greet the guests.

Also, receptionists have to have their faces clean shaven and apply perfume all the time, especially for those whose duty is assigned at the back desk. The non-manager employees, however, indicated that there should be uniformity or similarity among all the departments and that their employees should adhere to the standards, otherwise, even isolated standards cannot work in improving the service quality. For instance, R6 indicated, *“I think all these standards help me personally to look smart and confident and so enhance my work quality.”*

The waiters have the most standards to follow. There are specific standards which are meant just for waiters in the hotels. Like changing the gloves after serving the food and again changing them when the table is neat and clean. Also, they need to wear a hotel hat all the time during their duty hours, and it is mandatory that they have a pen with them. All these standards are just meant for the waiters. The waiters admitted that these standards are meant for their betterment and that if they follow them, then ultimately they will be on the right path to improve the quality of the services.

The waiters indicated that there is top management and immediate supervisors who notice them every time and any unprofessional conduct can lead to immediate dismissal. The waiters however indicated that for them, the standards are little bit higher as compared to other departments because when it comes to food the most important part is hygiene. The food may be very tasty but if it is or it seems to be unhygienic, the customers will not even try to taste it. For instance, if they are wearing dirty clothes and serving the food to the customers, they might not eat it, or if they eat it, they will complain about their looks to the management, which will be embarrassing for the waiter. At this stage, at least they are highly expected to be well groomed and neat and clean. Even when there is no official training in this aspect, there should be a sense of self-grooming among waiters. Following proper standards brings uniformity in work and workplace and also helps in being more self-confident about their work.

The waiters also indicated that compared to five-star hotels, standards in three-star hotels were a little less. In the five-star hotels, there are many standards in combination such as, if their overcoats are dirty then it is obvious that their inner shirts and underpants will not be that clean either; it is thus that cleanliness in one aspect is associated with the others. In addition, in a five-star hotel, the expectations from both the management and the customers are very high. When the employees are hired, they are informed about standards and service quality of the five-star hotels so that they cannot complain about the high service standards that are necessary for them to follow. The hotels also need to ensure that employees take pride in following the quality standards, like serving their customers with full enthusiasm. The employees should be motivated by HR and top management where employees' efforts should be appreciated, appraised, honoured and rewarded for maintaining the best quality services.



Given the stressful nature of the job in five-star hotels, as related to the standards which have to be maintained, the work becomes hectic regardless of the hierarchical position. Sometimes, employees have to stay overtime and have to work up to 12 hours to fulfil quality standards. For instance, in housekeeping, quality standards mean cleaning each room one after the other, and if there are 20 different rooms with dirty bed sheets that need to be taken to laundry, it means that each bed sheet will be washed individually in the laundry. Also, it is housekeeping which is responsible for taking the correct bed sheets to the correct room. Also, each room has a different quilt that has to be properly managed by them. These are their standards which have to be followed and which sometimes cause the employee stress and burn-out with the job.

The employees in this regard should be motivated through both intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as by showing them appreciation and giving them incentives for doing over-time. For instance, H4 indicated, *“I must say that following standards leads to praise from the management. Also, we have to follow them anyhow so why not follow them happily. In housekeeping the standards are clean polished shoes with white socks, and general smart grooming.”* He further added, *“It is also important to finish all the rooms before your duty ends, like if I am supposed to clean 30 rooms in an 8 hour shift, I have to do it whether it takes 10 hours or 12; we can’t do 29 and leave, because it is against the quality standards of the hotel, and then we have to listen to rebukes from the managers.”*

The employees indicated that they need to be informed more about the quality standards and that they should be provided with the renewed training on the quality standards. For instance, E1 indicated, *“I am only partially aware of the standards that event servers have to follow.”* Proper training by HR can have a significant effect on attaining to the standards of high service quality. For instance, E3 indicated, *“During the training, I was informed that I needed to ensure that I always followed the quality standards that were in place – standards which had to be followed by all event servers”.*

#### **4.12.1.2 None or Few Quality Standards Followed**

Some interviewees also indicated that there are none or few quality standards followed in their hotels with regards to service quality. These employees indicated that even though the managers believed that employees followed the quality standards fully, that was not the case since managers cannot at times ensure that all the quality standards are complied with due to various

issues such as workloads. Hence, they follow quality standards to a certain extent only. Some of the standards specified in the quality standards are not necessary for the hotel and for that reason they have trained their teams in such a way that at times, they do not have to follow all the standards. Despite this fact, the employees suggested that whether there are quality standards or not, they need to always ensure that they offer high service quality to all the guests coming to the hotel.

Some employees indicated that while theoretically, they strictly followed the specified quality standards when they are serving the customers, when it came to reality that was never the case. For instance, HW1 indicated, *“We train waiters and inform them about the quality standards that they have to comply with. However, when it comes to the actual service provision, we are aware that it is not practically possible to follow the quality standards at all times.”*

Some other employees indicated that at times it was not possible for them to strictly follow the specified standards due to time constraints as well as to other factors even though the management tends to always emphasise the need for the complying with the specified standards. For instance, R2 indicated, *“I would be lying to you if I said that we have certain specific quality standards that we comply with.”*

Some other employees indicated they do not follow any standards and do what they feel is right or wrong. For instance, R5 indicated, *“To be honest, I don’t follow any standards. I just do what I wish to do. But some are important like being presentable to the customers - we all have to be that, but apart from things like smiling or greeting, more than that I can’t do.”*

Some other employees believe that the hotel does not really have any specific standards that it expects its employees to follow so that they can offer high service quality. Some other employees are simply not aware of the presence of specific quality standards. For instance, E1 indicated *“I am not aware of any specific quality standards that have to be followed by the waiters in the hotel.”* Similarly, E2 mentioned that, *“I am not aware of any specific standards that event servers have to comply with. I think this is mainly due to the fact that the hotel considers our work to be of less importance.”*

Some other non-manager employees indicated that at times, it was just not possible for them to follow the quality standards at all times. The reason for that was due to the fact that at times, they had so many guests to serve that they could not follow the quality standards given since if they

did so, some of the guests would not be served. They, however, suggested that maybe if they had enough staff in the departments at all times, it might be possible for them to follow the standards at all times; but as they do not have sufficient staff, it is just not possible to follow the standards fully at all times. For instance, C1 indicated, *“It is not possible to follow standards consistently since there are times when there is a lot of work to do, and following specific standards will result in work that needs to be completed not being completed”*.

#### **4.12.1.3 Quality Standards Provide Direction for Achieving High Service Quality**

Formal processes or procedures that are explicit in nature are found in operational manuals and in information technology systems. Operational manuals or information technology systems have been adopted over time to support day-to-day activities, instructions, or decision-making in different types of service organisations, including hotels. Employees, then, would become professionally conscious and capable of understanding the broad meaning and the actual importance of organisational service quality and productivity. An integrated professional philosophy and work habits attached to organisational goals would be developed within the organisation. The nature of the tasks to be completed, scheduled duties, or unscheduled guests' personal requests, would look irrelevant due to the efforts and concentration of employees in securing customer satisfaction and organisational profitability.

Productivity performance and service quality standards are highly influenced with a serious impact on customer satisfaction and the consistency of the hotel's service delivery process. In this regard, another key theme was that quality standards help ensure delivery of high service quality. The HR managers indicated that they took quality seriously and the only way that they could achieve high quality was by ensuring that they fully complied with certain quality standards. The quality standards are very important to use since they help ensure that the workers comply with the specified standards so ensuring that the quality of the services the hotels offer are constantly high. Without these quality standards, it could be a big challenge for the five-star hotels to maintain high quality standards. It is important that all employees should comply with the standards.

The HR managers indicated that any employee found not to comply with the standards, undergoes disciplinary action. They further indicated that by ensuring that the quality standards

in place are complied with, they ensure that the service quality is constantly high. In the five-star restaurant, the customers expect the best service from the staff, and the only way that they can ensure that high service is constantly maintained is by ensuring that the quality standards that are developed are fully complied with. For instance, HR4 indicated, *“By following the quality standards, we increase the persistence of high service quality.”* It is very important since by complying or following the quality standards, the hotels get to be certain that the level of service quality is high. Again, going back to the example of the housekeepers - if they follow the specified standards, they are certain that the rooms have been cleaned to the highest standard possible and that the customers will be happy with the rooms. HR6 indicated, *“We are aware of the fact that if we want to ensure that we maintain high service quality, we need to keep the quality of our services high at all times. The only way to achieve that is by having quality standards that we follow at all times”*.

The head cooks further indicated that the fact that they are working in the kitchen and preparing meals that are eaten by the customers of the hotel means that there is no room for any leeway when it comes to quality standards, since overlooking some of the quality standards could result in disease breaking out among the customers and the employees, which would have a negative impact on the hotel brand. The main reason is that if the quality standards are not strictly followed, the quality of the services offered will decline, and that would be devastating for the long-term future of the hotel. For example, if the cooks no longer look at the expiry dates of the various ingredients that they use, the cooks are going to prepare meals with ingredients that have expired and that could result to an outbreak of disease in the hotel which would result in health issues for their customers, and thus, ultimately create a negative image of the hotel.

The receptionists also indicated that they believe that if everyone follows the standards, the quality of the service offered will consistently be high, and that in turn would result in high rates of customer satisfaction, which would create a positive image for the hotel, as when many customers are satisfied with the services offered, the chances are that these customers would definitely come back and would off course recommend the hotel to their friends, family members, and even work colleagues. Hence, it would be better if all departments had quality standards that are specific and had to be followed at all times since that would improve the service quality of the hotel. For instance, R4 indicated, *“Yes these standards help us to greet the*

*guest in the best possible manner; and also we have a sense that we have provided high quality of service to the customers.”*

It is mainly due to the fact in a five-star hotel, the services offered have to match the standards of any five-star hotel. For example, when a guest asks for lemon tea, the staff are expected to serve high quality lemon tea and nothing else. W3 also indicated, *“I think that these standards are well worth following, and every workplace should have some standards which differentiates it from its competitors”*. The quality determines the extent to which guests are going to be satisfied with the services offered and it is for that reason that the hotel strives to ensure high level quality is offered to the customers.

#### **4.12.1.4 New Employees’ Induction and Training**

Another key theme was new employees’ induction and training. The HR managers stated that before any employee started to actually work for them, the employee had to undergo induction and training where a lot of emphasis was placed on complying with the set quality standards. The receptionists also indicated that they had been trained on what they were expected to always do when interacting with the customers in order to ensure that they offered high service quality. They were also trained to provide enough information about the area and the hotel which gives the guest an idea on the service or products he/she can get. This will help the customer to be more satisfied and happier. If they do not tell the customer about the services, he/she might leave without using it - which would result in the hotels losing the opportunity to show the customer what they have.

For example, if the guest has children, the receptionists need to inform the guest about the swimming pool in the hotel and about the play parks around the area. If the children are happy, the parent will also be happy and satisfied. They also need to be self-confident in their job since if some guests unnecessarily try to be somewhat smart with them and tell them to mend their ways or anything unusual then obviously they can say that they are following their hotel’s standards and these are the management’s orders which they have to strictly adhere to. They need to understand that if they do not follow the standards then the customers can complain about something; then they are not confident enough to tell them what is wrong and what is right so, the customers take advantage of this and try to get the staff to do unnecessary work for them.

W6 indicated, *“I was hired a short time ago and I am still learning each and every thing. The management is giving me proper training about the quality standards, and until I am unclear about them I can’t serve the customers.”* He further indicated, *“Also in this hotel, as the brand image is there, the supervisor won’t allow any staff to be ill groomed or unhygienic; they won’t allow you to work on your shift in such conditions; and also I have learned that for a waiter, what is important is the hotel hat.”* This shows why training in standards is important when hiring and inducting a new employee in the five-star hotel.

#### **4.12.1.5 Ensuring Everyone in a Team is Following Specified Quality Standards**

Another key theme was ensuring everyone in a team was following specified quality standards. The supervisors indicated that they needed to make sure that everyone on their team followed the standards in order to be more efficient in their work. They were also made aware of the strict actions that the management takes if employees are not adhering to the standards. If any staff member is caught by supervisors or top management not following the required norms, then they have to bear all the consequences with no excuse being accepted for failing to adhere to the standards.

The supervisors also indicated that if their teams were not following the standards, then ultimately, they, the supervisors, were responsible and answerable to the management for their team members’ careless behaviour. So, they have to be strict with the junior staff in order to make them fully functional, and they also explain in serious tones, that it is not at all allowed for staff to slip away from the standards while performing their duties. In this regard, HS2 indicated, *“Housekeeping means cleanliness and we are taught from the very first day that cleanliness is next to godliness and if the housekeeping department is not clean then it is not possible for the hotel to be clean and shining.”*

The cooks also indicated that they had to ensure that the head chef or whoever was in charge of the kitchen at any given time of the day confirms that meals served to the customers are of high quality and meet the standards expected by the customers. The housekeepers indicated that the management, in order to make them follow the standards, always keep a watch on them. The immediate managers before the start of the shift give them a proper session on standards and remind them of their duties. For instance, H5 indicated, *“We have to perform those activities and*

*do exactly the same as told by the manager at the beginning of the shift.*” The management takes it as an important aspect of the hotel.

#### **4.12.1.6 Keeping Regular Checks on Quality via Written Records**

Another key theme was keeping regular checks on quality via written records. The housekeeper supervisors indicated that when it came to housekeeping, there were no shortcuts and that their housekeepers were aware of the fact that they needed to do strictly follow the specific standards when they were applying the service quality as they did not have any reason to compromise on the service quality. Every housekeeper was given a work sheet which he or she had to sign when he or she cleans any room. So, by the housekeeper signing the work sheet, that is a confirmation that all the quality standards have been complied with. For example, a signed work sheet confirms that the housekeeper has cleaned areas that required being cleaned, changed sheets and made the bed, and also dusted the areas that required dusting.

If supervisors make inspections and find that the housekeeper signed the sheet and actually never did what he had signed for, disciplinary action is taken that may even result to the housekeeper being dismissed. It is useful for the non-manager employees to keep a record of their activities in order to avoid any such situation. For instance, R2 indicated, *“Last month, a customer noted that the sheet on her bed had not been straightened and that resulted to the laundry manager being asked to sign a worksheet proving that the sheets had been straightened before they were distributed to the housekeepers.”* The housekeepers indicated that every morning, or whatever time the shift begins, they are handed a circular in which each day’s activity is written and which they have to perform.

E1 indicated, *“It totally depends upon the client feedback. Also, at the end of the event there is a questionnaire that has to be filled out by the customers that rate us from 1-10, and it has a variety of questions on it.”* The feedback given by the guests is used to determine whether the services were of high quality or not. Indeed, frequently, the supervisor calls the guests who attended an event that was taking place at the hotel and asks them whether they were satisfied with the services offered. When the responses are not encouraging or if some issues are raised, the supervisor then shares the concerns raised with junior staff and then deliberates on how such experiences could be avoided in the future. Therefore, even if there are no stated quality

standards that are to be complied with, the hotels can make efforts to ensure that all customers are satisfied. The hotels need to develop specific quality standards for all the departments since these standards can help enhance quality in all departments.

#### **4.12.1.7 International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) Certifications**

Some employees mentioned in their interviews that they were following certified quality standards, which is a positive sign for the image of the hotel in terms of service quality among the customers. For instance, HR1 indicated, *“Our hotel received ISO 9001 and ISO 140001 certifications some years back which shows that we fully comply with various quality standards.”* In addition, HR4 indicated, *“The hotel has also earned SO 9001 certification for Quality Management Systems and ISO 14001 certification for Environmental Management Systems which shows the extent the hotel is ready to go to ensure that quality standards are followed.”* ISO stands for International Standard Organisation; this body develops and publishes various international quality standards. For example, the ISO 9001 and 140001 certifications that they award, certify that a hotel has made efforts in the way of advancements in quality assurance and sustainability standards.

#### **4.12.1.8 Consequences of Not Following Quality Standards**

Some interviewees also highlighted the consequences of not following quality standards. The supervisors stated if their subordinates commit some mistake for the first time, they politely explain it to them but when the mistakes are repeated from time to time then there has to be some action taken against them. If subordinates do not follow the standards, what supervisors do is they cut their subordinates' salary; so, for example, if a delinquent subordinate has worked for eight hours, then he has to sign for seven hours on the register. Also, these employees falling below the required standards are offered fewer shifts. These disciplinary procedures work well in that they ensure that in future the recalcitrant employees will attain to a higher standard of workmanship. HS2 indicated, *“If they don't consistently follow standards, they are issued with warnings”*. Other employees indicated that if they do not follow quality standards or try to save some time by compromising on these standards, then, ultimately their work will be below a



standard threshold, with the customers perhaps complaining to the management, which in turn can lead to severe consequences.

#### **4.12.1.9 Separate Quality Control Department (QCD)**

Another key theme was separate quality control departments. Some employees indicated that there is a separate or independent QCD in their organisations. For instance, HR1 indicated, “*We have a quality department that works together with the heads of every department in developing quality standards that have to be complied with in each respective department.*” Similarly, HR4 indicated, “*We even have a quality manager whose responsibility is to develop these quality standards together with heads of various departments and then ensure that they are complied with.*”

#### **4.12.2 Relationship between the Job Description and the Service Quality**

Job description plays the key role in understanding whether there is an actual gap in role clarity or lack of motivation which is ultimately causing the lack of service quality behaviour. Lack of job clarity is itself one of the demotivating factors. However, some employees tend to perform high standards of service either because of lack of job clarity or purely because of lack of intention and motivation. Also, it is implied that lack of job description can negatively impact on the HR practices outcomes, from recruitment and selection to promotion systems due to employees not getting the clarity regarding what is expected of them and what are basically their job responsibilities. Most of the hotel organisations do not provide the written job description to their employees as they are informed verbally regarding their responsibilities and daily tasks. This causes lack of clarity among employees regarding their positions, and it also causes resentment among employees when they are assigned to additional duties. This can ultimately jeopardise any other HR practices and service quality issue. This is also one of the reasons which led the researcher to include the job description question in the interviews in order to investigate the mediating impact of job description on HR practices and service quality. HR needs to provide formal job descriptions listing basic job responsibilities and additional roles and duties in order to make a positive impact on the service quality behaviour of employees. HR also needs to

provide clear understanding the roles and duties of employees. The revised model implies that clear job descriptions have a positive impact on both HR practices and service quality. Four themes were highlighted as noted in the following table.

Table 22: The impact of job description on service quality

Does Job Description Impact Service Quality	HR Managers	Supervisors	Non-manager Employees
Job Description Leads to Clear Understanding of Expected Service Quality Standards	✓	✓	✓
Effectiveness of Job Description in Hotels	✓	✓	✓
Duties Outside Job Description Create Hurdles for Delivery of Service Quality		✓	✓
Unclear Job Description Makes it Difficult for Employees to Deliver Quality Service	✓	✓	✓

These themes are discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

#### 4.12.2.1 Job Description Leads to Clear Understanding of Expected Service Quality Standards

Regarding the predominant theme related to a relationship between job description and service quality, the interviewees indicated that job description leads to a clear understanding of expected service quality standards as being the predominant factor. The HR managers indicated that job descriptions give employees a clear understanding of what they are expected to do and the level of quality required. They indicated that they always ensure that the job descriptions encapsulate all the details about the positions of each respective employee. For example, when there is a vacancy for a receptionist, they have to liaise with the head receptionist to ensure that the job description they write up for the perusal of prospective candidates for the vacant situation clearly explains in great detail the roles and responsibilities of a receptionist and what they will be expecting from the individual who will eventually be hired. They further indicated that a lot of effort goes into ensuring that the job descriptions are correct since it is from the job description

that our employees can get a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities that they are assigned as well what will be expected of them by the hotel. From the perspective of the connection between the job description and service quality, it is very clear that a detailed job description enhances quality of service, since from the outset, anyone submitting an application for any vacant position will have a clear understanding that the hotel expects high service quality from them.

As far as the relationship is concerned, there is a strong relationship between detailed job descriptions and service quality, since by having a detailed job description, all the employees come to understand what the hotel expects from them in terms of service quality. Thus they endeavour to offer the best service quality that they are capable of. So, a detailed and clear job description is going to enhance the quality of their services. The supervisors indicated that they are very clear about an employee's job description and his responsibility at his given level. A clear job description makes it easier for employees to perform their work well - so resulting to higher quality service being offered to customers. They understand each and every standard and what the description exactly wants to bring out of the employees in terms of quality service. For example, the rule concerning the throwing away of the used towels placed in each room is meant for hygiene purposes. It is not at all hygienic to give a used towel to other customers. Even if the towels are washed, service standards are still considered as being below par.

Also, employees think the management promotes those employees who are aware of each and every standard required of them by the hotel. So, employees will try to maintain that standard under all circumstances, and also when they are following each and every rule related to the stated standards. And when employees do so, the service quality will be very high, but any given employee can only fulfil the standards if he knows his job responsibilities and is totally aware of his job description. A good job description means that from the time one is hired, one will have a clear understanding of what the job entails, how one is expected by the hotel to do the job, and even what the customers expect. So, a good job description is going to enhance service quality as it informs the employee about the various aspects of the job.

#### **4.12.2.2 Effectiveness of Job Description in Hotels**

Another key theme was effectiveness of job description in hotels. The HR managers (HR1, HR3) indicated that as the phrase “job description” suggests, a job description specifically outlines the duties, purpose, responsibilities, scope, and in some cases, the working conditions of a job along with the title of the job. Reflecting on the job descriptions that they put forward in their hotel, they are certain that they are quite effective and actually are very crucial to the quality of the service offered. The HR managers indicated that it is quite detailed since they have explained the roles and responsibilities that the person will be required to undertake. Apart from that, they also listed the expectations that they have from the person who will be hired.

The majority of supervisors indicated that their job description is clear as it outlines all the roles and responsibilities of a housekeeping supervisor. They know what they are supposed to do and they also know what the hotel requires of them. For example, the job description of a cook outlines that he has to, check the freshness of the food and ingredients that are used in the kitchen, inspect and coordinate the activities of the cooks and other personnel working in the kitchen, ensure that all the kitchen staff are aware of their roles, and devising new recipes, while at the same time establishing how the food prepared is going to be presented to the customers, ensuring that food is served in portions that are similar to each other in any given dish, examining the supplies, ensuring that the kitchen is kept clean at all times, supervising cooks, preparing meals, and monitoring the sanitation practices, and also ensuring that the health and safety standards are kept at all times.

The non-manager employees indicated that their job descriptions clearly indicated what their job demands of them. Before taking the job, they were very sure about what they would have to do. This is actually a bonus since it saves them from disappointment in future; disappointments which usually arise from jobs from vague job descriptions.

#### **4.12.2.3 Duties outside Job Descriptions Create Hurdles for Delivery of Service Quality**

Another key theme was that duties not mentioned in job descriptions create hurdles for the delivery of service quality. The supervisors indicated that if job descriptions do not outline what

is expected from the individual that is hired for a certain position, then the individual would not be able to have an understanding regarding the quality standards or expectations. It is not possible for a job description to encapsulate all the dimensions of a job; that has at times posed a challenge to some workers since they argue that they are asked to do something that is not contained in the job description. *For example, R6 said “when the room service guy is not available, I have to go to another room and take the used dishes after a customer demands that the dishes to be taken away”.* However, one can never find that listed on the job description. Even though one might think that there is a detailed job description available, the roles and responsibilities assigned to employees cannot be exhaustive.

The supervisors indicated that the human resource has done its best in ensuring that the main roles and responsibilities are encapsulated in the job description but they have never encapsulated everything. They can however not be blamed for this as some of these roles just emerge over time. For instance, *HCI said “if the kitchen porter fails to report for work, then some other employee has to look for one of the assistant cooks to assist with the kitchen duties for that specific day”.* One cannot find such roles explained in the job description. The receptionists also feel that they manage the entire hotel and maintain the coordination among all the work area, but, this is not listed in their job description. The job description is fine though there are some roles that it does not include. For example, a receptionist can find that even though the job description does not explain that the needs to help other employees of the hotel, he most of the time finds himself doing jobs that he is not supposed to do. *For example, R4 said the hotel never told me that I have to act as a concierge for the guests. However, I always find myself advising guests on places that they need to visit while also making bookings for their itineraries. Also R6 indicated, “guests can ask that he book movies for them, and he cannot decline to do that even though that was not in his job description”.*

#### **4.12.2.4      Unclear Job Descriptions Make It Difficult for Employees to Deliver Quality Service**

Another key theme was that unclear job descriptions make it difficult for employees to deliver quality service. The HR managers indicated that it was important for the job descriptions to be clear since if they were not clear and could not be understood by the employees or if some details

were avoided, the employees would be unable to be in a position where they could understand the roles and responsibilities that they are assigned and how they are expected to carry out those duties. They indicated that they develop their job description in consultations with the manager of each department. So, the job description is quite effective.

The supervisors indicated that if they did not know their job descriptions, they could not provide high service quality. However, when they knew their job descriptions, it became easy for them to follow the standards as they came to know why those standards were important and thus they became fully aware of the importance of each standard. *HSI indicated, “knowledge and awareness of these standards would result in the employees giving of their best in following them”* and so encouraging their junior staff to follow the standards and clear up all their queries regarding the standards. The non-manager employees indicated that if job descriptions were not clear, employees really could not obtain any clear understanding of what their roles and responsibilities.

#### 4.12.3 Relationship between Job Rotation and Service Quality

The purpose here was to assess how three groups of employees described the job rotation in their hotels and how it positively or negatively affected the delivery of service quality. Job rotation is generally practised at non-manager employee level in the hotel industry. It is implied that proper shift management could have a positive mediating impact on HR practices and service quality. However, if employees are rotated without their willingness to be so, then job rotation would have a negative impact on other HR practices and ultimately on the service quality. The findings observed from this relationship are illustrated in the following table.

Table 23: Relationship between Job Rotation and Service Quality

What is Relationship of Job Rotation and Service Quality	HR Managers	Supervisors	Non-manager Employees
Job Rotation is only Practiced in Some Departments	✓	✓	✓
Job Rotation is not Practiced	✓	✓	✓
Negative Effect of Job Rotation	✓	✓	✓

Positive Effect of Job Rotation	✓	✓	✓
No Effect of Job Rotation			✓

Table 23 shows the thematic analysis regarding the impact of job rotation on service quality. These themes are discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

Only few interviewees (HR1, HR3, FO2, W2) indicated that job rotation was practiced in their hotels and that is also particularly in some departments. The HR managers indicated that there was some form of job rotation even though it was not as what it was imagined as being. For example, the hotel ensures that the HR administrators are rotated in order to ensure that they have experiences in dealing with various HR issues. But rotation between departments, like a member of the HR Admin staff being asked to work as a cook or a waiter does not happen. The non-manager employees indicated that job rotation in their five-star hotels was done to some extent because their hotel believes in providing quality services and each staff member is expected to be the best in his job. They indicated that their duties are rotated so that they could deliver their best services. For instance, sometimes, an employee's duty of greeting the guests was changed to making bookings on phone calls. This change is positive as employees get to learn new things.

However, the majority of interviewees indicated that job rotation was not practiced in their hotels (HR3, R2, FOS1, and FOS2). They also spoke mostly negatively, or at best, in neutral terms, about job rotation; thereby suggesting that job rotation would not affect the service quality. Some HR managers indicted that they did not practice job rotation at their hotels, neither did they really advocate it, for they claimed that in their hotels it was just not possible to rotate the employees without such a practice having a negative impact on service quality. For example, imagine having a waiter being asked to work in the HR department. It would not work and would negatively impact on service quality. Some non-manager employees also shared similar such views. They averred that job rotation was not going to work in their hotel as in a five-star hotels the employees need to be trained on how they can do their own individual specific jobs so that they are able to offer customers high service quality. That requires the use of many resources and much time; and even then, the attainment of high levels of quality service are not guaranteed. Some employees do not even have any interest in being transferred to other departments, neither

do they have time to learn the skills which would allow them to fit into the new department. If employees are forced to rotate, they might quit, or, if they agree to the necessary training, may end up providing low quality service. In such circumstances, job rotation would negatively affect service quality as averred by some non- manager employees (R1, R6) while wasting a lot of resources in both time and money. For these reasons, it cannot be practised in their hotels.

#### **4.13 Summary of Results**

Chapter Four has presented, explored, and analysed findings of the current research, developed through close observation of, and discussions with, the hotel staff of the Canadian five-star hotels. The findings have been presented as themes that could be common to the research objectives. Seven main themes were identified in light of the respondents' talks. First, the concept of service quality was identified. Second, the main determinants of service quality were categorized. Third, the relationship between requirement and selection and service quality was well documented. Fourth, the relationship between training and development and service quality was highlighted. Fifth, the relationship between incentives and rewards and service quality was then recognised. Sixth, the relationship between promotion systems and service quality was highlighted. Seventh, the relationship between all the HR practices in aggregate and service quality was discussed. Finally, the revised model of the relationship between HRM practices and service quality was deliberated upon and amended by adding three main themes of standards, job descriptions and job rotation effects.



## 5 Conclusions

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews and summarises the results of the data analysis in chapter four. Section 5.2 reflects the research question and how it was answered in this study. Section 5.3 summarises the findings according to the research objectives. Section 5.4 highlights the theoretical implications of the results, while section 5.5 emphasises the main contributions to methodology. Section 5.6 reflects on the practical implications for approaches that can be used and adopted by practitioners in the hotel industry. Section 5.7 identifies some limitations of the study and proposes some areas and directions for future research. Finally, section 5.8 summarises the whole thesis.

### 5.2 Addressing the Research Question

The research question originally presented in chapter one was as follows:

***What is the impact of HR practices on service quality in the Canadian hotels?***

This question was addressed in three stages. The first phase of the research, detailed in chapter four, adopted a qualitative study strategy to achieve the research objectives for the following reasons.

First, a qualitative study is suitable for gaining a deeper understanding of the topic in its real-life context. It reveals the key issues relating to the service quality concept in the Canadian hotel context. In addition, it explores the HRM practices related to service quality improvement. Since the service quality concept is vague, it was decided to select British Colombian five-star hotels (six hotels in total) as research sites for a qualitative study. Five-star hotels are famous for their high quality and their managerial approaches, so they can be emulated by others. Moreover, studying their managerial perspectives as related to the research subject will then help to generalise to others.

Second, considering the research question, qualitative research represents a proper methodological approach to answer what, how or why research questions (Yin, 2014). Therefore,

the current research applied the qualitative study approach as a methodological strategy to answer the research question and achieve its aim and objectives.

Third, Yin (2017) further added that qualitative study assists understanding of the unique features of a particular topic. Finally, the qualitative study strategy enables researchers to use multiple data collection methods (or multiple sources of evidence) to answer their research questions, which in turn fosters the validation of data through triangulation and thus enhances the outcomes of the research.

Three successive sets of interviews were implemented in this research. Set one involved six non-standardised interviews (one-to-one) with HR managers. Seven themes were merged to reflect the conceptual model constructs.

Set two involved six supervisors being interviewed so as to get their feedback on the initial model. This resulted in a multitude of qualitative data as a result of which the key themes were merged and grouped to address the research question. Therefore, the research aimed to confirm, modify and validate the initial findings by interviewing different levels of employees.

In set three, 22 interviews were conducted among the non-managerial staff in the selected hotels and a qualitative method was used to give a generalisation for the final model (see figure 20).

Finally, key findings from the research were analysed and presented, in chapter four. The study has therefore addressed the research question, while the research objectives will be reviewed in the next section.

### **5.3 Review of Objectives and Major Findings**

This section details the objectives on which the research was based. Evidence is provided regarding how the study has addressed each objective – this is detailed as follows.

**Objective 1:** Conduct a critical review of relevant literature related to service quality, its dimensions and evaluations and the HRM practices that improve service quality in the hotel context.

This research objective was met by carrying out a comprehensive review of current and relevant literature (see chapter two). It clarified the need to present the intended HRM practices of recruitment, selection, training and development, incentives and rewards, and internal career opportunities, all of which reflect the key practices related to service quality in the Canadian hotel industry.

However, it was discovered that much uncertainty exists surrounding the concept of service quality in the hotel industry: its determinants, debates, and the relationship between HRM practices and service quality. In particular, the literature was synthesised to reveal the importance of considering the qualitative approach in order to obtain a better understanding of the relationship between HR practices and service quality in hotels.

The final section of the review explored the impact of HRM practices on service quality by presenting a conceptual model (figure 9).

Based on a review of the literature, gaps in current knowledge have been identified and the research question has been addressed. Many studies recommended to investigate in the role of HR practices and service quality in the Canadian hotel context in particular due to the labour supply challenges (see chapter 3).

The conceptual model of the study was developed (see figure 9 and figure 20). This research model identifies the main determinants of service quality and expected service quality outcomes.

**Objective 2:** Evaluate the degree of hotel staff's awareness of different service quality dimensions.

This research objective was met consistently and in detail through the qualitative study findings (see chapter four).

The data collection in this study was carried out using interviews with hotel staff (six HR managers; six supervisors; 22 non-managers). The main aim was to explore the meaning and the value of service quality among hotel staff and to get to know the opinions of hotel seniors about the initial model constructs. In order to identify the determinants of service quality in international five-star Canadian hotels, the responses to four interview questions were analysed. These interview questions are questions three, four, five and six. These themes were reorganised

after evaluation of the major themes in the individual questions. Six major themes were identified regarding the determinants of service quality in international five-star Canadian hotels. The first major theme identified the determinants of service quality in international five-star Canadian hotels. This theme is related to achieving customer satisfaction, which is important for the long-term profitability and long-term sustainability of the service offerings of the hotels. The interviewees believed that service quality meant satisfying the customers, and that when quality was high customers were fully satisfied. The service quality in this context is quite important for hotels since it determines whether their customers get what they expected from them; if they fail to get their expectations met they will not be satisfied. It is a critical factor in determining whether customers are satisfied with the services that they are offered. The customers are only going to be satisfied with high-quality service, which will eventually have a positive impact on the hotel. Service quality is important for the hotels since if customers are satisfied and are convinced that the service offered is of high quality, they will eventually come back. Some interviewees also indicated that when it comes to five-star hotels, the importance of customer satisfaction is even greater as the staff in these hotels have to go the extra mile in order to satisfy the customers. The supervisors ensure that all guests are satisfied with all aspects of the services – everything from tangibles to meals. If the service quality is low, the customers will obviously not be satisfied with the services that they receive, which implies that the customers cannot have good perceptions of the hotel. For example, if a meal is well prepared but the waiter has a bad interaction with the customers, the customers will leave with the perception that they received very poor service. Hence, it is all about ensuring that customers are satisfied in all aspects.

Building effective and highly trained teams of employees and staff is another important theme regarding the determinants of service quality in five-star hotels in Canada. Various sub-themes were identified as being related to this determinant of service quality in five-star hotels in Canada. Some of these themes were related to providing training to employees so that they could understand their roles and duties and provide the highest quality of service standards expected from them. Many interviewees indicated that to achieve high-quality service, all employees in organisations are thoroughly trained on how they are supposed to offer services to the guests. In order for the hotel to ensure that the customers coming to the hotel get good service quality, as predetermined by the hotel's stated standards and as perceived by the hotel staff, the hotel always ensures that employees are thoroughly trained on how to offer quality service on a regular basis.

It is important to provide good training for employees on how to deliver services and create a good workplace environment – one that helps them to do their best. Any new employee starting work at a hotel will tell you that there are specific service standards (see Appendix 5) that each department has to follow, since during the induction week employees are briefed about these standards and informed that the standards have to be complied with at all times.

Factors in practising high-quality service from the SERVQUAL model are another important theme regarding the determinants of service quality in five-star hotels in Canada. These factors are reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness. Tangibles are one of the factors to take into consideration. This category entails the physical features of the services and products that are being offered at the hotel. Some of the aspects that are considered in a hotel and are part of tangibles include appearance of the rooms, food, and even the staff working in the hotel. Assurance provides the knowledge as well as the courtesy that the employees are expected to create with the customers in terms of trust and confidence. Another factor is reliability, which entails that if the hotel cannot deliver what it has promised the guests, then the guests will not be satisfied with the services offered. Empathy is also important and has to be shown to each and every customer. It is necessary for hotel employees to show customers that they care for them and that they are ready to go to great lengths to ensure that they have a wonderful experience with them. Responsiveness is another important determinant since it is paramount that all the employees are willing and ready to promptly attend to the needs and demands of the customers.

Finally, the service quality dimensions that were identified and examined in this study have coincided with the current and relevant review of the literature. As a result, service quality has been defined as the manner in which employees use the available resources or information to provide a valuable result according to customer needs and expectations. Then the main determinants of service quality were developed and confirmed the multidimensional nature of service quality in the hotel sector in general and the difficulty of evaluating service quality in hotel operations.

**Objective 3:** Identify the HRM practices that improve or impede service quality from the hotel staff's perspective.

The findings of this study indicated that there is a strong relationship between recruitment and selection and service quality. The themes obtained from interviewees suggested that an established process from hiring to induction of new employees was an effective first step in ensuring that new people joining the organisation were aware of the service quality standards and expectations. The findings further indicated that recruitment and selection help in the hiring and selection of skilled people to deliver service quality. This suggested that recruitment and selection as an HR practice play a key role in service quality. This is in fact the first step in ensuring that employees are able to understand the expectations of service quality for five-star hotels in Canada.

The findings of this study also indicated that there is a strong relationship between training and service quality. The themes obtained from interviewees suggested that employees are generally provided with on-the-job skills training at all levels. This training will eventually help them to acquire various skills to achieve the desired service quality outcomes. The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies in the available literature. Training and on-the-job mentoring at Accor Hotel Group and Hilton Corporation were the heart of the knowledge sharing and creation policies adopted by these establishments in developing professional competences and effective teams (Hilton, 2009).

Training is an important HRM practice for creating a business environment for high organisational performance: *“Training positively impacts employee productivity, results in higher levels of employee satisfaction, increases an employee’s ability to perform tasks, and increases knowledge transfer among employees”* (HR6). It is clear that dedicated time for workplace learning and job-related training is required for high organisational performance.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicated that there is a strong relationship between rewards and incentives and service quality outcomes. The themes obtained from interviewees suggested that incentives and rewards motivate employees to perform to high standards of service quality. In addition, both monetary and non-monetary incentives and rewards are given to

enhance job satisfaction and employee motivation. The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies in the available literature (Sinclair, 2003; Kondrasuk, 2011).

Moreover, this study indicated that internal career opportunities are not a strong determinant of service quality in the hotel industry of Canada. The themes obtained from interviewees suggested that both external and internal hiring is done but preference is given to one or the other according to the expediency of the moment. In addition, while promotions are based on both performance and non-performance reviews within the same department, the same is not available for internal career opportunities in terms of employees moving from one department to another. This is further validated by employees not being rotated in their jobs. This relationship coincides with Dessler (2011), as career opportunities might have an effect on ensuring quality of service.

**Objective 4:** Identify the relationship between HRM practices and service quality in hotels.

Various factors contribute to the effectiveness of HRM and influence service quality in multinational hotels in Canada. Based on a review of a significant volume of literature focusing on HRM worldwide and in Canada, the main issue of “multinational hotel HRM practices” can be divided into the following categories: “recruitment and selection, training and development, and rewards, incentives, and internal career opportunities”. Although these issues have been mentioned several times at all levels of the literature review (global, Asia and Canada), few of the studies have focused on multinational hotels. None of these issues has been tested at the multinational hotel level. Thus, the present study fills some of the gaps in the literature.

Recruitment and selection of the qualified and skilled employees in the Canadian hotels were the first practices that proved to have a direct link to service quality. This coincides with Shen and Huang (2012) as they averred that recruitment and selection practices influence service quality.

The shortage of qualified employees creates a need for high-quality training programmes in various organisations, especially multinational hotels, which need higher-quality employees to meet the international standard. People in Canada favour employment in companies with adequate and advanced training and development programmes, which may offer them better career development opportunities (Malila, 2007). Controversially, companies may regard training as a waste of time and/or money. Some small hotels may not have enough capital to support their training. However, in terms of companies, training may increase working efficiency

among employees and maintain high service quality. As previously discussed, service quality is one of the key factors in maintaining the competitive advantage of this people-oriented industry (Wang, 2011). Therefore, hotel companies must offer sufficient and proper training programmes because through training sessions employees may better fit into their positions, reduce the cultural gap, and become fully involved in Western-style multinational corporate cultures.

In addition to benefits and compensation, development opportunities are other major factors that may affect the turnover rate. Brands should offer sufficient orientation and on-the-job training to help newcomers better adapt to the position and brand culture.

Recreational training, such as yoga and flower arranging, might bring more fun and a learning atmosphere to daily work. Another key strategy to retain qualified employees is to offer adequate development opportunities, such as cross-training in other properties or study in universities overseas. Fox (2007) stated that formal leadership programmes, as well as on-the-job learning opportunities, have become important in attracting and retaining talent in Canada. Finally, only two of the managers interviewed claimed they have career plans for every new employee. For instance “ *we always keep in mind that every employee needs to have career plan in place*” HR3 and HR 5 said “ *career plans exist for all workers ...*”. However, creating a clear career plan is an effective way to help employees become motivated. They may stay to grow with the company if they can clearly see their career paths. Malila (2007) contended that companies should build talent for long-term considerations instead of buying it for the short term. The findings of this study are also consistent with these findings.

The findings of this study indicated that rewards, incentives and internal career opportunities are important factors for influencing service quality. This also includes turnover and rotation. The findings of this study revealed that positive turnover, which means internal transfer, is positive for a company’s operation. However, negative turnover affects the turnover rate, increases hotels’ recruitment and training costs, and decreases productivity when co-workers leave. Therefore, negative turnover is discussed in the following sections.

Because the products that hotels offer to their customers are intangible services, employees who offer quality service directly can contribute to the advantage of their hotels (Law and Tam, 2007). However, graduates (who might provide quality service) want rapid growth and may feel underestimated by their supervisors. They have claimed that they do not have opportunities for



managerial roles (Zhang and Wu, 2004). Compared with other industries, the hotel industry has been listed as one of the lowest-compensation industries and cannot offer its employees competitive compensation and benefit packages (Shen and Huang, 2012). At the same time, hotel professionals who have a strong knowledge of English and management skills are quite popular with banks and other organisations. Furthermore, a lack of employee culture may be a potential factor motivating employees to leave the company for even a small increase in salary or elevation of position (Ferreira and Alon, 2008). As a result, high turnover may be the common issue that reduces productivity and the morale of other employees.

The hotel industry has been regarded as a low-income and high-workload service industry (Fox, 2007). Therefore, fewer graduates enter the industry, thus aggravating the current situation. Presently, the most important step that five-star hotel management should consider is repositioning the industry and rebuilding the industry's image, especially among the younger generation. Hotel professionals could make industry presentations in high schools, letting students know the reality of the hotel industry. Young people should know that there are a lot of opportunities in the hotel industry as it is among the fastest-growing industries in Canada. Talented people in the industry can move up much more quickly than in other industries. Hotels could offer talented employees opportunities for further study in universities overseas. Hotel professionals should try their best to establish a prestigious image of the hotel industry among young people. Therefore, when members of this new generation enter the industry, they will not be disappointed and leave immediately.

**Objective 5:** Develop a conceptual model that describes the relationship between HRM practices and service quality for hoteliers.

Phase one identified the initial model based on the literature review and the hotels' senior staff's perceptions of the initial conceptual model (figure 9). The initial model was developed from and composed of specific HRM practices that have an effect on service quality. The model will help managers to manage service quality on the basis of realising the different service quality measures and the importance of integrating customers' needs and expectations.

Phase two confirmed and modified the initial model in the light of the comments and feedback gained from the selected hotel staff. The result was a revised model (see figure 20). Some new

themes (such as standards, job descriptions and job rotation) were merged and all of them demonstrated the relationship between HRM practices and service quality for hoteliers.

In light of the previous discussions, it can be claimed that all objectives required to answer the research question in this study have been met.

## **5.4 Contribution to Study**

### **5.4.1 Contribution to Knowledge**

There is a debate in research addressing which HRM practices directly impact on service quality in Canadian hotels. The current study has contributed to the knowledge and understanding surrounding this issue in the hotel industry.

This study reviewed the current and relevant literature comprehensively. It stated the need to present the intended HRM practices of recruitment, selection, training and development, incentives and rewards, and internal career opportunities, all of which reflect the key practices related to service quality in the Canadian hotel industry. However, it was found that much uncertainty exists surrounding the concept of service quality in the hotel industry: its determinants, debates, and the relationship between HRM practices and service quality. In particular, the literature was synthesised to reveal the importance of considering the qualitative approach in order to obtain a better understanding of the relationship between HR practices and service quality in hotels.

Based on a review of the literature, gaps in current knowledge have been identified. Many studies recommended to investigate in the role of HR practices and service quality in the Canadian hotel context in particular due to the labour supply challenges.

In addition, the study explored the meaning and the value of service quality among hotel staff and to get to know the opinions of hotel seniors about the initial model constructs.

The service quality dimensions that were identified and examined in this study have coincided with the current and relevant review of the literature. As a result, service quality has been defined as the manner in which employees use the available resources or information to provide a valuable result according to customer needs and expectations. Then the main determinants of

service quality were developed and confirmed the multidimensional nature of service quality in the hotel sector in general and the difficulty of evaluating service quality in hotel operations.

Various factors contribute to the effectiveness of HRM and influence service quality in multinational hotels in Canada. Based on a review of a significant volume of literature focusing on HRM worldwide and in Canada, the main issue of “multinational hotel HRM practices” can be divided into the following categories: “recruitment and selection, training and development, and rewards, incentives, and internal career opportunities”. Although these issues have been mentioned several times at all levels of the literature review (global, Asia and Canada), few of the studies have focused on multinational hotels. None of these issues has been tested at the multinational hotel level. Thus, the present study fills some of the gaps in the literature.

Recruitment and selection of the qualified and skilled employees in the Canadian hotels were the first practices that proved to have a direct link to service quality. This coincides with Shen and Huang (2012) as they averred that recruitment and selection practices influence service quality.

The shortage of qualified employees creates a need for concentrating on training programmes in various departments in order to meet the international standard. Controversially, companies may regard training as a waste of time and/or money. Some hotels may not have enough capital to support their training. However, in terms of companies, training may increase working efficiency among employees and maintain high service quality.

The hotel industry has been observed as a low-pay and high-workload service industry (Baum, 2016). Therefore, fewer graduates enter the industry, thus aggravating the current situation. Presently, the most important step that five-star hotel management should consider is repositioning the industry and rebuilding the industry’s image, especially among the younger generation. Hotel professionals could make industry presentations in high schools, letting students know the reality of the hotel industry. Young people should know that there are a lot of opportunities in the hotel industry as it is among the fastest-growing industries in Canada. Talented people in the industry can move up much more quickly than in other industries.

This study helped to identify the most effective HR practices that influence the service quality of the hotel industry in Canada and thus sustain productive employment relationships in workplaces for sustainable growth. In this study, it was found that there is a positive relationship between HR practices as a bundle (recruitment and selection, training and development, rewards and

incentives, and internal career opportunities) and between the level of service quality. Interestingly, many interviewees highlighted the role of job standard, job rotation and job description in improving the service quality. These practices were added later to the conceptual model (figure 9) and the final revised model was created (see figure 20).

Finally, based on the findings of the study, it has been possible to refine what is meant by service quality and in doing so move towards a more accurate working definition as developed through this study and thus make another contribution to theory and literature in terms of the manner in which employees use the available resources or information in order to provide a valuable result according to customer needs and expectations. This service quality definition highlights the multidimensional nature of service quality and therefore provides a novel contribution to knowledge.

This study evidenced a conceptual model (figure 20) acting as a value stream mapping of specific HRM practices and their effect on delivering high service quality.

The current study model contributes to professionals understanding and knowledge of the causal relationship between HRM practices and service quality. Additionally, this study contributes to identifying which human resource practices hotel firms can adopt to ensure service quality in the hotel sections. Moreover, the proposed conceptual framework contributes to improving our understanding of the causal relationships between HRM practices and service quality. The research was conducted in the hotel sector of Canada, and specifically in the British Colombia area.

#### **5.4.2 Contribution to Methodology**

This study contributes to methodology since the most of previous researches on the relationship between HRM practices and service quality in Canadian hotel industry were quantitatively investigated. This qualitative study acts as a value stream map that includes five processes or practices (recruitment and selection, training and development, incentives and rewards, and internal promotion opportunities) guided by hotel standards and following robust job descriptions that will ensure high levels of service quality.

### 5.4.3 Contribution to Practice

The findings of the current study provide interesting and practical managerial implications for the hotel sector in general and for Canadian five-star hotels in particular – as investigated in this particular study. It is concluded that the final model developed could be used not only for ensuring service quality but also for improving and managing HRM practices. In the case of service quality decline, it was found that the substantial impact of some HRM practices can help improve service quality.

The study holds several practical implications for hotel industry. First, a hotel could select workforces based on job-related characteristics, i.e. personality and job knowledge, resulting in the consistency of service quality. Thus, workers have a satisfactory understanding and uphold uniformity of service quality when communicating with customers. Second, employee perceptions of “training & development” and “compensation & benefits” will impact the perception of responsiveness of customers through service actions. Therefore, if hotels can provide workers with customer service courses and offer incentive rewards programmes, then the more likely workers tend to be supporting clients and assisting guests with issues beyond what is anticipated or needed. Third, in managerial practices of HRM, offering training and development activities to hotel employee is valuable and forms employee’ service behaviour. Hotels must pay particular attention to a systematic needs assessment, and rigorous assessment. In addition, if workers can expect their efforts to be properly rewarded, they are more likely to satisfy different customers’ needs. Finally, if workers were hired through sophisticated recruitment and selection procedures planned to screen out all but the very best prospective candidates, then the attention that the workers provided to their guests would be encouraged through the service behaviour. In a hotel service setting, superiors can inform candidates about the special service culture in hotel industry by recruiting and selecting, to appoint employees for the hotel, rather than for a certain job. Then workers might make greater effort to recognise customers’ need thereby improving customers’ perceptions of the “empathy” dimension of service.

In addition, the findings of study provide solid reference data for hotel managers to reduce many employee-related costs by measuring their productivity and matching an employee’s salary with effort. Moreover, it could identify those HRM practices that have improved service quality in hotels. The findings may provide organisational leaders and other stakeholders with evidence

regarding effective HRM practices in workplaces. In this way organisations can increase the satisfaction of their customers and so incline them to become loyal customers. Furthermore, the outcome of this study may assist five-star hotels to establish a closer relationship with their employees on the basis of mutual respect, benefits and understanding. Improving their ability to establish and maintain effective employment relationships in the workplace is expected to contribute to organisational success and higher performance (Duncan et al., 2013).

Understanding this relationship is very important for several reasons. First, by understanding the relationships between HRM practices and service quality within the five-star hotels of Canada, managers in these companies may better improve service quality and therefore enhance the competitiveness of their organisations. Second, understanding the relationship between HRM practices and HRM outcomes may contribute to the development of HRM practices aimed at retaining competent employees and developing the employee skills and capabilities required for high service quality. Third, by understanding the relationship between HRM outcomes and service quality, managers in five-star hotels in Canada can better attain HRM outcomes such as highly competent employees, employees committed to learning, and higher levels of job satisfaction, thus achieving higher levels of productivity and in turn effectively meeting organisational goals and objectives. The results of this study, therefore, extend the current literature regarding the relationships between service quality and HRM outcomes.

## **5.5 Research Limitations and Direction for Future Research**

### **5.5.1 Methodological Limitations**

A major limitation concerned the qualitative study research design. The data collected for the proposed study may limit the generalisation of the findings only to independent hotels, which are not members of international hotel chains. Consequently, the findings might not be applicable to other international hotel destinations or other hospitality organisations. However, generalisation of the findings from the current descriptive-qualitative study is not a concern due to the limited number of empirical studies and the need to gain an in-depth understanding of the link between HR practices and service quality.

The focus of the qualitative study was to explore HR practices and service quality determinants. The researcher specified from the beginning of the thesis that the aim was to explore an organisational problem, considering the limited literature on and knowledge of HR practices and service quality outcomes within five-star hotels in Canada, rather than to generalise the findings. Given this, the limited volume of qualitative research available on HRM practices and service quality in the hotel industry has limited the opportunity to gather content-rich information from previous studies. Further research may include some control and context variables (e.g., hotel ownership type, position level, gender) that were not included in this investigation. In this study, through a cross-sectional survey in the last phase, a number of models were tested. However, a longitudinal study is required to further explore the temporal dynamics of the resulting models. Also, in the future it is recommended to use mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) in order to come up with more generalisable results.

Longitudinal data on HR practices and service quality are required to convincingly and assertively repeat such findings embodied here, although such techniques are expensive to achieve and are as yet unobtainable in many cases (Huselid, 1995). In addition, this study is implemented in the hotel industry only, therefore, the sample size could have been larger and more diverse if it was implemented in multi-sectors.

The reliability of the study was maintained through clear documentation of the procedures that were being carried out throughout all stages of the research. Consequently, it is expected that if the research were replicated then the same or similar findings would be identified. Due to the subjectivity surrounding thematic analysis, it cannot be claimed, however, that a researcher from a different background or discipline would not identify additional or different themes from the data. This is not a weakness of this study, as the focus of the research was made clear from the beginning: it emerged from the gaps in the literature and the interests of the researcher himself. This focus subsequently guided the identification of themes when analysing the data.

### 5.5.2 Practical Limitations

This study has some limitations as it was designed for a small-scale sample (six hotels) and was restricted to Canadian five-star hotels. It is focused on hotel staff perceptions rather than customers', although the hotel staff positions involved are of paramount importance. Further research may take all hotel staff positions into account, and customers also. Furthermore, further studies could investigate one-, two-, three- or four-star hotels to find out how HRM practices contribute to improving service quality in them.

Further research will be needed to gain better support for the proposed final model, especially in a comparative study between different hotel employees in different hotels and in different countries, considering that their level of quality might be of paramount importance for further research. All this should be in addition to studying all staff capabilities, behaviour, innovations and satisfaction and their relation to service quality.

Another limitation is related to the predetermined HRM practices investigated in this study, which are recruitment and selection; training and development; rewards and incentives; and internal career opportunities. It may be useful to select more practices or different ones to investigate the relationship with service quality. Future work on HRM practices should include validating these practices with other individual HR constructs such as HR planning, job analysis and job evaluation. In addition, the presence of statistics regarding the hotels' fiscal indicators, the reports of employee performance, the competitive position in the market, output standards' indicators, and customer satisfaction rates, would have assisted in attaining further results.

In conclusion, I would encapsulate the following lessons learnt during my PhD journey that would strengthen my research in future. Firstly, contrary to my perception, literature review is a critical phase that merits serious attention. I am now better equipped to undergo the various phases of research as opposed to when I had started. I realised that all phases of the PhD journey are interlinked and that considering this flow would help ensure consistency. Secondly, I observed during the data- gathering stage that some workers expected to be financially compensated for sparing their time for the interviews. In future, I would consider compensating the participants for their time. The qualitative interview is more time-intensive than a quantitative questionnaire. A quantitative questionnaire could take merely 10-20 minutes, but I



spent 60-90 minutes on each employee with qualitative interview. Thirdly, I learnt not to confine my sample to a single geographical area (British Columbia province) in order to avoid any adverse impact on the research objectives. My selection of British Columbia province was based on my familiarity with the location. The entire process of following up with some participants took nearly 4-6 months, however, this built a good relationship with the hotels and this may allow me to collect more data for future research. In future, I will consider exploring different hotels across all provinces. In addition, some hotels refused to keep their promises and I had to restrict myself to five-star hotels. Going forward, I will broaden the category of hotels for data collection, which may facilitate a discussion on how each classification deals with the HR and service quality. Fourthly, I found qualitative data analysis to be challenging, especially concerning the ability to interpret and write the response's meaning in the script. Thus, the addition of a mixed-method (quantitative survey) will make it easier to reveal the results. However, the qualitative method did make new contribution to the methodology, as posited by previous scholars. Finally, highlighting the contribution of my study was challenging, but I learnt that it is important to refer to the statement of the problem, then write from general to specific. All of these tips that I gained from my PhD journey enriched my research and planning skills for future research.

## **5.6 Summary**

This study aimed to improve knowledge and understanding surrounding the concept of service quality in the hotel industry by exploring its relationship with HRM practices through three successive sets of research. The first set of data collection in this study was carried out using non-standardised interviews with a sample study of senior HR managers in six Canadian hotels. The main aim of this set was to explore the meaning of service quality among hotel staff to get to know senior hotel staff's opinions of the initial model constructs. The second set was implemented using interviews with supervisors and then non-managers to achieve consensus on the proposed model. Study implications were suggested and research limitations were also highlighted. Also, another set was designed to gather data from non-management workers on the relationship between HR practices and service quality.

## 6 References

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## **7 Appendices**

### **7.1 Appendix 1: HR Managers Interview**

Section 1: Giving thanks to the participant and offering an overview of the study.

**Question 1:** Please explain briefly about your background and experience in this industry.

**Question 2:** If I work in your hotel, what type of benefits I will receive?

Section 2: Service quality concept questions.

**Question3:** What service quality means to you in your hotel? Why and how it is important?

**Question 4:** In your opinion, what factors should be taken into account when applying high level of service quality?

**Question5:** How would you describe the employees experience in applying high service quality in the hotel? Are there any difficulties or problems?

**Question 6:** How would you describe the employees experience in applying high service quality in the hotel? Are there any difficulties or problems?

Section 3: HRM practices questions.

**Question 7:** How would you describe the recruitment and selection process in this hotel and how would you describe the relationship between them and the service quality?

**Question 8:** What sort of training you provide for the employees and how would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question9:** We all know how difficult is to motivate the employees, how would you describe the incentives and rewards system that the management follow with their employees (specifically, the low level employees)? And, how would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question10:** To what extent the hotel applies the job rotation? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question11:** How would you describe the promotion system that provided by the management to the employees? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question 12:** In your experience, to what extent the job description of employees is effective here in this hotel? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question 13:** In your experience, how would you describe HR practices (selection and recruitment, training and development, rewards and incentives, and internal career opportunity) as a bundle? Do you deal with them as one set that completing each other? Or do you deal with each one separately? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality? Explain in details and provide professional answer.

### HR MANAGERS (Full Transcript)

<b>Question 1</b>	<u>Please explain briefly about your background and experience in this industry.</u>
<u>HR1</u>	<b>HR Manager:</b> I am a trained HR professional. I did my undergraduate in business management and then pursued a postgraduate in Human Resource Management. I have worked in two different hotels in the human resource department. I have been working with my current employer for the last seven years. In total, I have at least 15 years of experience in the hotel industry working in the HR department. Among others comprises of maintaining and enhancing the hotel's human resources by planning, executing, and assessing employee relations and human resources policies, programs, and even the practices.
<u>HR2</u>	<b>HR Manager:</b> I have worked in the HR department for various organisations for the last twenty two years. I started as a HR admin 22 years ago and have earned promotion over the years. Currently, I work as Human Resource Manager for (Name Withheld for privacy reasons). I have been working for the current organisation for the last seven years. In my capacity as a Human Resource Manager, I am in charge of employment concerns, morale and mentoring, legalities, and even strategic.
<u>HR3</u>	<b>HR Manager:</b> I have been working in the hospitality sector for almost ten years now. Prior to that, I worked in one of the leading retailers in the country as a human resource administrator and was responsible for the basic human resources aspects of the company. I then did my masters degree, got employed as an assistant HR manager for another four star hotel. I then applied for the post of HR manager at the current hotel and have since then been working as a HR manager here. So, I have ample experience working in the HR department as of various

	hotels.
<u>HR4</u>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Do you want me to explain about my age, educational background and such stuff</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Not really .....Just your background and experience you have in the industry.</p> <p><b>HR manager :</b> I have a bachelor's degree in Human resource and then did an MBA in HR five years ago. In total, I have seven years experience working in HR departments of two different hotels. In the previous hotel, I was a HR assistant manager, and for the last three years, I have been working as a HR manager for my current employer who is a globally reputed five star hotel.</p>
<u>HR5</u>	<p><b>HR manager:</b> Do you want me to explain about my personal background or my career background?</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Just your career background please</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> I have been working in the hospitality industry for the last seventeen years. My mother worked as a manager at Hilton and it was from her experiences that I decided that I want to work in the hospitality industry. I have an undergraduate degree in Business Administration and then did a Masters in HR. I have worked for three different hotels as I started as a HR admin. I then moved to my previous employer where I was employed as an assistance manager. I then have been working at the current hotel as a HR manager for the last 6 years.</p>
<u>HR6</u>	<p><b>HR manager:</b> I have been working in this industry for the last three decades. I have always wanted to work in the hospitality industry and I have actually been fortunate enough to achieve my career goals since I now work as the HR manager for the hotel. As a HR manager, I am in charge of planning, directing, and coordinating the administrative functions of the hotel. Moreover, I also oversee short listing, interviewing, and hiring of new employees. Apart from that, I am also involved in the Hotel's strategic planning.</p>

<b>Question 2</b>	<u>If I work in your hotel, what type of benefits I will receive?</u>
<b>HR1</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Our hotel is a five star hotel and you should be able to receive various types of benefits that are specifically aimed not only at motivating you to do your best but also ensuring that you get to work for us for a very long time. Recruitment and hiring</p>

	<p>exercise is become quite expensive and many organisations are now embarking on ensuring that they get to retain their valued employees for a very long period of time. Some of the benefits that you would receive if you join our management team comprises of; attractive salary, health insurance packages covering even your family members, 30 days paid annual leave, subsidized meals, conducive work environment, and car loan scheme among others.</p>
<b>HR2</b>	<p><b>HR Manager :</b> Our hotel is a five star hotel. You therefore have to expect the best working environment that you can get when working in a hotel. We offer our employees free meals, the salary is definitely better than what other hotels offer and our working environment cannot actually be compared with what other hotels offer. The reason why that is the case is due to the fact as a five star hotel , we cannot get it wrong when it comes to quality of the services and products offered to our customers. So, we understand that we have to ensure that our employees are well looked after so that they can then look after our customers well. You might be surprised to hear that our workers on numerous occasions go out of their own way to ensure that our customers are fully satisfied. The reason why they are able to do that is mainly due to the fact that they feel that they are part of the hotel and they know well that once the customers are happy with the services that they receive from them, their long tern employment with the hotel is almost assured.</p>
<b>HR3</b>	<p><b>HR Manager :</b> We are a five star hotel and for that reason, you can expect to receive the best compensation packages available as well as a very good working environment. Actually, even our casuals whom we hire during the summer months when we are fully booked like to work with us since the pay that they receive from us is the best while compared to what other employers pay. If you are looking for work after your graduation, you might so consider applying to work with us. You never know.....You could end up been our employee.</p>
<b>HR4</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The main benefit that you will have working in our hotel is that you will be working for a five star hotel so, everything will be five star. What I mean is that, the pay will be better than what you could get working for other hotels, the working environment will be suitable for you, you will get a chance to advance your career, and you will also get other additional benefits. So, you will be privileged to work with us and we are certain that you will love it.</p>

HR5	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> You will be working for a five star hotel. If you are not aware of what that means, it means that you will be working for a hotel that has been classified to be among the best hotels. The working environment will so be better unlike would be the case if you working in a three star or even a hotel that has no rating. Moreover, you will also get good pay. You will get to interact with professionals and you will also get to grow professionally. You can submit your resume once you finish your studies and in case there is a vacancy that fits your qualifications, we will definitely hire you.</p>
HR6	<p><b>HR Manager :</b> Our hotel is a five star hotel. If you were to work for us, you will receive various attractive benefits. Among others, some of these benefits comprises of; attractive salary, 30 days paid holidays, increased holiday entitlement depending on the duration of service, free dry cleaning for uniforms, free meals whilst on duty, health and dental cover, cut-price accommodation for you and your friends and family, and promotion opportunities. Come work for us and you won't be disappointed with the benefits that you will receive from us.</p>

Question3	<p><b><u>What service quality means to you in your hotel? Why and how it is important?</u></b></p>
HR1	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Let me start by defining what I understand service quality to be.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Go ahead please</p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> Any customer served at our hotel has a certain expectation of the kind of service that he/she is going to get from our hotel. In that view, service quality quantifies the extent to which a service is delivered, contrasted to the expectations of the customer. Therefore, even though people tend to think that it is the hotel that determines the service quality, we are of the view that the service quality is determined by our guests since if we can meet and even surpass their expectations, they will be of the view that the service quality offered is very high. However, in situations where we cannot be able to meet the expectations of our guests they will leave a feedback indicating they were disappointed for the low level service they received. Service quality is therefore important for us as a hotel since it has a great impact on our operations. For example, if guests complain about</p>

	<p>our services and we do nothing, demand for our rooms and services will drastically decrease eventually. I hope you now get to understand that as a five start restaurant, high quality service is one of our key success factors.</p> <p>To achieve high quality service, all our employees are thoroughly trained on how they are supposed to offer services to the guests. We also collect feedback from customers willing to give feedback about their experience on our facilities and analyses the feedback and acts upon it in order to ensure that we get to satisfy our customers. Finally, all the heads of the different departments are tasked to ensure that their respective departments offer the best level of service quality possible.</p>
HR2	<p><b>HR manager:</b> OK.....Serve quality means surpassing the expectations of the customers. You see, when a customer comes to our hotel, the customer has some expectations about the quality of the services and products to offered. So, if we can be able to meet these expectations and actually surpass them, the customers will definitely feel that they have been offered quality services. They will so have a positive experience with our hotel and they are likely to use our services in the future or even recommend our services to their friends, colleagues, or even family members in the future.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And how do you ensure service quality</u></p> <p><b>HR manager :</b> We normally request our guests to give us feedback on our services and products. From the feedback given, we can then be able to gauge whether the quality of our services and products is good enough to meet the expectations of the customers. For those who dine at our restaurant and don't get to spend their night with us, we can get their feedback from interactions on social media or even by having the supervisor asking them simply whether they enjoyed the meal at the hotel or not. Once feedback has come in, we analyze it and if need be, we act upon the feedback. Remember we are a five star hotel and we have to offer services that are of high quality to our customers.</p>
HR3	<p><b>HR manager :</b> In our hotel, service quality means satisfying the customers. We are a five star hotel and our customers expect to receive the best accommodation and hospitality services that there can be in most parts of the world. So, when we are able to meet the expectations of our customers and fully satisfy them, it is at that point that we can say that we offer our customers a five star service quality. It is not an easy thing to achieve though through</p>

	<p>hard work, we have managed to consistently achieve that over the years.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>What is the importance of service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> The quality of the services that we offer to our services goes a long way in determining the success of the hotel. When quality is high, our customers are fully satisfied. They with either book our rooms in the future or recommend the hotel to other clients. However, when the customers are not satisfied, that is not possible and that is obviously going to have a negative impact to the overall operations of the hotel. So, we always strive to do our best in ensuring that our customers receive five star quality services.</p>
<b>HR4</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> For the hotel that I work for, service quality comprises of a purposeful assessment that reflects the customer's observation of specific aspects of the service offered. These aspects comprises of consistency, receptiveness, reassurance, understanding, and tangibles. On the other hand, satisfaction of the customers tend to be more inclusive and is mainly determined by perceptions of service quality, product quality, and price that the customers have to pay among others. For instance, when customers pay premium prices for the services offered by our hotel, they expect the best quality and nothing else from us. The service quality is in that context quite important for us since it determines whether our customers get what they expected from us or not and if they are satisfied, they could end up becoming loyal customers or become ambassadors of the hotel as they will refer their friends and colleagues to the hotel. Therefore, for us, the service quality will determine the success or failure of the hotel.</p>
<b>HR5</b>	<p><b>HR manager:</b> Service quality can only be quantified from the feedback that we get from our customers. For instance, if our customers tell us that they are happy with the services that they receive from us, to us that is an indication that our service quality is high. On the other hand, if the feedback that we get from our customers is negative, then that shows that the service quality is low. So, there are various aspects that comes into play when it comes to the issue of service quality. To begin with, the hotel needs to be clean, and the ambience needs to send out the message that we are offering high quality services. All our staff needs to be clean and professional when they are interacting with our customers. There is a lot to service quality that I could not even exhaust if I started talking about it.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> And why is service quality important to your hotel?</p>



	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> It is very important since as I already explained, it is a critical factor in determining whether the customers are satisfied with the services that we offer or not. The customers are only going to be satisfied with a high quality service and that will eventually have positive impacts to the hotel. They will obviously use the services that we offer in the future and might even recommend the hotel to other clients. Nevertheless, if the service quality offered was low, that would never happen. I guess you can now see the reason why we put a lot of emphasis on service quality.</p>
HR6	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Service quality is the degree to which the customers perception of the services that the hotel offers are met. For example, as a five star hotel, our customers hope to receive the best quality of services possible. So if the services that we offer them surpasses their expectations, the customers are going to say that the service quality is high. Nevertheless, if the services offered do not meet their expectations, the customers are going to say that the service quality is poor. So, as a five star hotel, we need to ensure that we offer our customers services of high quality. We need to ensure that the hotel keeps attracting as many customers as possible and the only way that is going to be possible is by ensuring that we constantly offer services that are of very high quality.</p>

Question 4	<p><u>In your opinion, what factors should be taken into account when applying high level of service quality?</u></p>
HR1	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Since I work in the hotel industry, I am going to discussed the factors that I believe needs to be taken into account when applying high level of service quality in the hotel industry and in particular my hotel.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Go ahead please</p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> Tangibles is one of the factors to take into consideration. It entails the physical features of the services and products that are being offered at the hotel. Some of the aspects that are considered in my hotel and are part of the tangibles comprises of; appearance of the rooms, food, and even the staff working in the hotel. The other aspect that we take into consideration when applying high quality service entails the aspect of reliability and responsiveness of the services. As you are aware, as a five star hotel, our customers have got very very high expectations from us. So, we need to ensure that we are capable of delivering what we promise to our customers and that they can</p>

	<p>rely on us. For example, we promise to offer baby cot for customers with small babies. That promise implies that in case a guest checks in and requests for a baby cot, we have to provide it since if we fail to do so, the guest will have the impression that the services being offered are below par and not of good quality. As a hotel we do whatever it takes to ensure that we offer our customers services and products that are of exceptional quality. Also, we must be able to minimise the complains by predicting what can make the customer upset. For instance, if the customer hates to wait too long, we try to speed up the check-in process.</p>
<b>HR2</b>	<p><b>HR manager :</b> During the time that I have worked in the hospitality sector, I have found that there are five main aspects that determine the quality of the services offered.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And what are these five aspects?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> The first one entails the tangibles. These comprises of the outlook of the physical facilities, the furniture, the equipment, personnel, and even how we communicate with our customers. The second one entails reliability, since if the hotel cannot be able to deliver what it has promised the guests, then the guests will not be satisfied with the services offered. The other aspect entails responsiveness since it is paramount that all our employees are willing and are ready to promptly attend to the needs and demands of the customers. The fourth aspect entails assurance where the knowledge as well as the courtesy of the employees is expected to create trust and confidence with the customers. Finally, empathy needs to be shown to each and every customer that we serve since it shows the customers that we care for them and that we are ready to do anything to ensure that they have wonderful and better experience with us.</p>
<b>HR3</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> I can answer this question in different perspectives. However, let me answer it using the most basic angle that you will obviously find easy to understand.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Go ahead please</p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> For any given organization, the quality of the service is only determined by comparing the expectations of the customers with the services that they receive. So, when the customers expectation are met with the services that they receive, the service quality can be said to be high while on the other hand, if the services offered fails to meet the expectations of the customers, then the quality of the services offered can be said to be low. For example, our customers expect that the meals served to them are freshly prepared, the rooms to be clean, and the utensils used to serve them to be clean. In addition, they also expect that the</p>

	<p>employees whom the interact with are highly trained and know how to interact with them in a courteous manner. So, there is a lot that comes into play when it comes to service quality and all aspects needs to be considered since if only one aspect is considered then the other aspects of the service offering could comprise of low quality and that is definitely going to have negative impacts into the customers perceptions of the hotel.</p>
<b>HR4</b>	<p><b>HR manager :</b> As I already explained to you, the main aspects that determine the service quality comprises of consistency, receptiveness, reassurance, understanding, and tangibles. So, when applying high level of service quality, it is important that these factors are taken into account. For example, in case of consistency, if the hotel cannot be able to serve all customers who come to the restaurant in a timely manner, then there is a high chance that some customers will be of the view that the services offered at the hotel are not of high service quality. Likewise, our employees need to show empathy, be receptive, and reassure our customers while the tangibles also symbolize the high level of service quality that we offer. Indeed, the furniture in the hotel, appearance of our employees, and even the ambience needs to resemble that of five star and of supreme quality.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Why is that important?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager :</b> Because it is paramount that service offer is of very very high quality. We are a five star hotel and five star means no compromise when it comes to the level of service quality.</p>
<b>HR5</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The first factor to take into consideration when applying high level of service quality entails steadiness. What that means is that customers must be able to get a certain level of service quality at all times that they are at the hotel. So, whether we have many guest or not, the level of quality should never decline. The other factor entails approachability which means that our customers must be able to access our services at any time without any challenges. For example, a customer who wants to use the room service should know that once he/she places an order through the room service, the order will be delivered within a short period of time. The other factor is that of guarantee which means that customers should be assured that whatever they happen to order, they will receive it. You can imagine a customer booking for a double sized bed and then receive a single sized bed. The customer is not going to be happy at all. The other factor is that of understanding where it is crucial for our staff to understand our customers and their needs and ensure that they do their best in ensuring that the needs of the customers are even exceed. Finally,</p>

	<p>the other aspect is that of tangibles which comprises of stuff such as the furniture and the interiors of the hotel. These are very important since it is vital that they are all of supreme quality. For example, the furniture needs to be modern and in great condition.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Why are these factors important?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> These factors are what determine the level of service quality. If they are well taken care of, they will assure us that we are offering our customers high quality service. However, if they are compromised, the quality will also be compromised and that will have negative impact to the service quality.</p>
HR6	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> For any given organization, quality is only quantified at the end of the service delivery. So, after the hotel has offered the customers the various services that it offers it cannot be able to change the service quality. At our hotel, when thinking about quality, we mainly use the SERVQUAL approach that comprises of five main dimensions. This dimensions comprises of; reliability which entails our ability to provide the promised service dependably and accurately, assurance which involves having the knowledge and courteousness of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence to our customers, tangibles which involves the outlook and appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and even the marketing materials, empathy which involves our employees been caring, offering individualized attention to customer and responsiveness which entails the ensoiasm to assist our customers and ensure that they are offered prompt services. The five dimensions are what our customers mainly consider when they are making the decision whether we have offered then high service quality or not and for that reason, we consider all the five dimensions at all times in order to ensure we offer high level of service quality.</p>

Question5	<p>To what extent your hotel follows specific standards when applying service quality?</p>
HR1	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> As I already explained to you, we go at any length to ensure that we offer quality services and products. We have a quality department that works together with the heads of every department in developing quality standards that have to be complied with in each respective department. You could even be surprised to hear that even in the HR department that I work in, there are specific quality standards that have to be complied with. Besides, our hotel received ISO 9001 and ISO 140001 certifications some years back which shows that we fully comply with various</p>

	<p>quality standards.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: What is ISO?</b></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> ISO stands for international standard organisation that develops and publish various international quality standards. For example, the ISO 9001 and 140001 certifications that we have certify our advancements in quality assurance and sustainability standards.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: So your hotel follows certain standards when applying service quality?</b></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> Yes, we do. We take quality seriously and the only way that we can be able to achieve high quality is by ensuring that we fully comply with certain quality standards.</p>
<b>HR2</b>	<p><b>HR manager:</b> Our hotel strictly adheres to specific standards when offering various services to our customers. Before any employee starts to actually work for us, the employee has to undergo induction and training where a lot of emphasis is placed on complying with the set quality standards. Take for example, the receptionists, the front office department has to ensure that the receptionists are trained on how they are supposed to interact with the customers and ensure that they feel welcomed. Likewise, the housekeeping department has quality standards that all housekeepers have to comply with. Indeed, once a housekeeper has cleaned a room, the housekeeper has to actually sign his/her name in the worksheet to confirm that all quality standards have been followed and adhered to.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: <u>Do you think that these quality standards are important and do you think that the employees actually comply with them?</u></b></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> The quality standards are very important to use since they help ensure that the workers comply with the specified standards so ensuring that the quality of the services we offer is constantly high. Trust me, without these quality standards, it could be a big challenge for the hotel to maintain high quality standards. We believe that all employees comply with the standards. For your information, any employee found to not comply with the standards undergoes disciplinary action.</p>
<b>HR3</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> We have quality standards for every department and they are strictly followed by all the employees working for the hotel. In the past, there was some laxity when it comes to complying with quality standards. However, that is no longer the case since every head of the department in the hotel is now required to ensure that the specified quality standards are complied with in every department.</p>

	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And why is it that the hotel requires the quality standards to be complied with?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> By ensuring that the quality standards in place are complied with, we ensure that the service quality is constantly high. Remember that we are a five star restaurant and that our customers expect the best service from us and the only way that we can be able to ensure that high service is constantly maintained is only by ensuring that the quality standards that are developed are fully complied with.</p>
HR4	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> We have quality standards that are strictly followed with by all our employees. For example, the kitchen assistant are expected to clean the kitchen a number of times a day and actually sign on the quality sheet that they did so. The same is the case for our receptionist since they have to ensure that any interaction that they have with our customers are carried out as specified in the quality standards. The hotel has also earned SO 9001 certification for Quality Management Systems and ISO 14001 certification for Environmental Management Systems which shows the extent the hotel is ready to go to ensure that quality standards are followed.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Why all such bother?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> Because by following the quality standards, we increase the persistence of high service quality.</p>
HR5	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> We always strictly follow various quality standards for each department. For example, the kitchen department has a quality standard that they comply with while the housekeeping department also has a quality stand and that they are expected to follow at all times. You might be surprised to hear that we even have a quality manager whose responsibility is to develop these quality standards together with heads of various departments and then ensure that they are complied with.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And why do you think that is important?</u></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> It is very important since by complying or following the quality standards as you put it, we get to be certain that the level of service quality is high. Again, going back to the example of the house keepers, if they follow the specified standards, we are certain that the rooms have been cleaned to the highest standard possible and that the customers will be happy with our rooms.</p>
HR6	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> We are a five star hotel and have developed quality standards that each employee working for us has to follow at all times. So, we very much follow specific quality standards at our hotel.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Why is that the case?</u></p>

	<b>HR Manager:</b> Because we are aware of the fact that if we want to ensure that we maintain high service quality, we need to keep the quality of our services high at all times. The only way to achieve that is by having quality standards that we follow at all times.
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<b>Question 6</b>	<u>How would you describe the employees experience in applying high service quality in the hotel? Any difficulties? Any problems?</u>
<b>HR1</b>	<b>HR Manager:</b> As long as an employee has the required skills, applying high service quality in the hotel cannot be a problem. We are aware of the fact that as a five star hotel, our employees cannot have any room for mistakes and need to get it right at the first time of asking. We always ensure that all employees have a clear understanding of what their job entails and what we expect from them. We then offer necessary training in order to ensure that they know what needs to be done in order for them to offer high service quality. So, I don't think there are any problems or challenges encountered by the employees as they embark on offering high quality service. Moreover, do not forget that we have made the employees aware of the fact that they should always ask for help whenever they are in need so that they ensure that they offer high quality service. We also organize regular events where employees get to bond with each other in order to ensure that there is good team spirit which goes a long way in ensuring that all the employees are dedicated in offering the best services to our customers.
<b>HR2</b>	<b>HR manager:</b> As I already explained to you, we offer thorough induction and training to our employees since we want all our employees to have a clear understanding of the level of service quality that we expect them to offer to our customers. Moreover, on any given shift, we make sure that supervisors are always there so that they can offer our employees any support needed. Again, we are a five star hotel and have to do whatever is required to ensure that the services that we offer to our customers are of very high quality. We also award the best performing employees on regular basis since we want to motivate other employees to also ensure that they do their best for the hotel.
<b>HR3</b>	<b>HR Manager:</b> All our employees are fully trained and have the required skills and expertise to comply with our service quality standards. We also regularly appraise the performance of the employees and when need be, we always plan for additional trainings to be carried out so that the employees get the skills needed to ensure that they offer high service quality. At times

	<p>especially during the summer when we are fully booked, we acknowledge that the workers have a lot of work to do and in order to ensure that the level of the service quality never declines, we hire additional staff to assist the employees. Moreover, best performing employees are also rewarded in frequent basis and that helps to motivate other employees to do their best.</p>
<b>HR4</b>	<p><b>HR manager:</b> The employees have a good experience when applying high service quality. We give them all the necessary support as we are also aware of the need for the high service quality and for that reason, they do not encounter any challenges. For instance, the employees are regularly trained and even when needed, we hire extra staff when there is heavy workload. We want to ensure that our employees are fully motivated to give all that they can when it comes to the service quality.</p>
<b>HR5</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The experience of the employees when applying the high service quality in the hotel is good. All employees are provided with adequate trainings and so have the required skills to apply high service quality. Furthermore, when our employees encounter challenges when applying high service quality, we always encourage them to seek help.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>That means that there are no challenges or problems?</u></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> Occasionally, there could be some challenges as the employees might be faced with a lot of work. For example, when a group that had not made reservations walks into the hotel and books, there is going to be a lot of work that was not initially planned for. At such times, the employees could encounter challenges as they try to offer the services to all guest. However, we also assist the employees by bringing in more workers. At such time we could phone workers who are not on shift or request workers already at work to work overtime as we do not want to compromise on quality.</p>
<b>HR6</b>	<p><b>HR manager:</b> The employees have a very good experience when applying high service quality. The reason why I can say that is due to the fact that we offer all our employees adequate trainings to ensure that they are capable of offering high service quality. Besides, we are also always ready to offer our employees all the support that they need in order to ensure that they are capable of offering our employees high service quality. For example, when the number of guests increases and we had not planned for that, we have to arrange for additional employees as we do not want to overwork the employees since overworking them will eventually result to the service quality been compromised. You might also be interested to know that employees receiving the best feedback in a</p>



	month get rewarded as we want to motivate all our employees to offer best service quality to all our guests at all times.
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<b>Question 7</b>	In your experience, to what extent the job description of employees is effective here in this hotel? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?
<b>HR1</b>	<p>HR Manager: As the phrases job description suggest, a job description specifically outlines the duties, purpose, responsibilities, scope, and in some cases the working conditions of a job along with the title of the job. Reflecting on the job descriptions that we put forward in our hotel, I am certain that they are quite effective and actually are very crucial to the quality of the service offered. The reason why I am of that view is because it is from the job description that the employees have a clear understanding of what they are expected to do and the level of quality required.</p> <p>Interviewer: Does that imply that job description is so vital to the quality of the service offered?</p> <p>HR Manager: Yes, as I said, we always ensure that the job description captures all the details about the position of each respective employee. For example, when there is a vacancy for a receptionist, we have to liaise with the Head Receptionist to ensure that the job description we put out there for those who want to make applications clearly explains in great details the roles and responsibilities of a receptionist and what we will be expecting from the individual who will end up being hired.</p>
<b>HR2</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The job description that we use in our hotel is definitely effective since we actually spend a lot of time and effort in ensuring that our job description depicts a clear understanding of the various jobs that our employees are assigned once they have been hired. Indeed, we even make it clear in the job description that the employee is expected to offer high level of quality service that cannot be rivalled.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And what is the kind of relationship between job description and the service quality?</u></p> <p>A good job description, definitely enhances service quality since it clearly articulates the job nature of service quality that the worker assigned the job is expected to offer to the customers. For example, the job description of a receptionist states that the receptionist is responsible for welcoming visitors by greeting them, in person or</p>

	<p>on the telephone with a friendly tone and ensuring that they feel welcomed. So, from that such a job description, anyone who is hired by the hotel as a receptionist has a clear understanding of what the hotel expects from him or her.</p>
<b>HR3</b>	
<b>HR4</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> A lot of effort goes into ensuring that the job descriptions are correct since it is from the job description that our employees can get a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities that they are assigned as well what will be expected from them by the hotel. So, it is important for the job description to be clear since if its not clear and cannot be understood by the employees or if some details are avoided, the employees cannot be able to be in a position where they understand the roles and responsibilities that they are assigned and how they are expected to carry out those duties.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>That means you believe that job description and service quality are related?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> Yes, the two are closely related since a poor job description will not result to a the employees been able to apply high service quality while a good job description will ensure that employees apply high quality. You might be interested to know that we regularly review the job descriptions to ensure that they provide our employees with the correct explanation of their roles and how they are expected to undertake those roles.</p>
<b>HR5</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> I don't know if by any chance you have had the chance to see one of our job descriptions. But it is quite detailed since we explained the roles and responsibilities that the person who we are looking for will be required to undertake. Apart from that, we also list the expectations that we have from the person who will be hired. In perspective of the connection between the job description and service quality, it is very clear since a detailed job description enhances quality of the service since from the word go, any submitting applications for any vacant position will have a clear understanding that we expect high service quality. However, if the job description was to be shallow, that would not be achievable as applicants cannot be able to clearly understand that we are expecting high service quality from them.</p>
<b>HR6</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> A job description encompasses a list that a person could use to have an understanding of the tasks, functions, roles and responsibilities of a given position. Moreover, it might at times even highlight the person who is to be reported to, as well as skills required to be effective in the job.</p>

	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And how is the job description in the hotel effective and what is the kind of relationship that it has with the service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager :</b> We develop our job description in consultations with the manager of each department. So, the job description is quite effective. As far as the relationship is concerned, there is a strong relationship since by having a detailed job description, all our employees get to understand what we expect from them in terms of service quality and they actually endeavour to offer the best service quality that they are capable of offering. So, a detailed and clear job description is going to enhance the quality of our services.</p>
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<b>Question 8</b>	How would you describe the recruitment and selection process in this hotel and how would you describe the relationship between the job description and the service quality?
<b>HR1</b>	<p>HR Manager: Generally, we hire from both internal and external even though when hiring for management positions, we mainly hire from external due to the fact that we have found it to be more beneficial as the individual hired from the outside will come with new ideas and concepts that we might not be able to have if we hired from the inside. Nevertheless, we always try to ensure that we get a good balance between hiring from internal and hiring from the outside.</p> <p>Interviewer: How about the process</p> <p>HR Manager: The process is quite elaborate. Actually, any applicant irrespective of the position has to be interviewed at least three times before a decision on the applicant who is going to be hired is made. You might think three interviews are a lot but we have realized that by having three interviews, we increase the chances of hiring the individual who is well qualified for the task.</p> <p>Interviewer: How about relationship between recruitment and selection and the service quality</p> <p>HR Manager: The recruitment and selection is the first step in the HR process. If we attract people to apply for the opening positions, we will have better chance to select the best of them who have the skill to provide good service quality. This will reduce the training cost at later stage.</p> <p>Interviewer: Do you mean that if you select the right candidate, you don't have to train them?</p> <p>HR Manager: Of course not. Training is something we can't neglect. But, having poor performers will consume more time to</p>

	<p>train them and this increase the cost, while the good and expert candidates will need shorter training and this reduce the cost.</p>
<b>HR2</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The recruitment and selection process at the hotel is quite exhaustive since we always want to ensure that we hire the individual who is most qualified to fill an existing position. At times, we recruit from the hotel and other times, we get to recruit from the outside. Some of the recruitment and hiring stages that we have to go through comprises of; job description and vacancy evaluation, person specification, summarizing the advertisement/ notification, determining the questions to be asked during the interview, inviting job applications, shortlisting applicants for the interviews, undertaking the interviews, selecting the ideal applicant, making the decision on the applicant to hire and finally hiring the ideal applicant.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And what is the relationship between job recruitment and service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> When the recruitment is thorough and the employees hired are those that are hired are quote qualified to fill the vacant position, there is a high chance that the employees are likely to offer services that are of higher quality to our guests. So, we always do our best in order to ensure that we hire the employees who are most qualified to fill the vacant positions since that increases the chances of these employees been able to offer high quality service to our customers.</p>
<b>HR3</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> At our hotel, when there is a vacancy, we hire from internal as well as the external. We believe in growth of employees and for that reason, we first aim to fill vacant positions with the employees already working with us and then if no suitable employee embark on hiring from the outside. The hiring process is also quite engaging and it involves the head of the department that we are hiring for as well as the HR department. So, we hire our employees and always tries to avoid using the employment agents since we realized that the agents at times can fail to do thorough background checks to the applicants.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And what is the relationship between that and service quality</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> When you take your time to ensure that you hire the best employee who is well qualified to fill an existing vacancy, there is a very high chance that the individual who is hired will not disappoint you when it comes to his or her performance. So, by ensuring that the individual hired to fill a vacancy is the most competent one out of all applicants, the chances of offering high quality services are increased.</p>

<p><b>HR4</b></p>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The recruitment and selection process is one of the most time consuming undertaking in the HR department since we are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that the employees who will end up been hired by the hotel will be an asset and not a liability for the hotel. So, we have to do anything possible to ensure that we hire competent employees who will not disappoint us. Most of the time, when there is a vacant position that needs to be filled, we at first try to recruit within the company. However, if there is no internal employees who are qualified to fill the position, we end up hiring from the outside. The recruitment process has nine major steps. They comprise of ; Step 1 which involves identifying vacancy and evaluating the need, step 2 which involves developing position description, step three which involves developing recruitment plan, step four which involves selecting search committee, step five which involves posting the position and implementing recruitment plan, step six which involves reviewing the applicants and then creating a short list of the applicants who would be invited for the interviews, step seven which entails conducting the interviews, step eight which involves selecting the individual to be hired, and the final step, step nine which involves finalizing the recruitment.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Hmm.....Seems quite elaborate, what is the relationship between the recruitment and hiring process and the service quality</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> If we hire an employee that has the required skills and competency, the chances of this specific employee applying high service quality are very high while on the other hand, if we hire an employee who does not have the required skills, then there will be very low chances that this employee will be able to meet the quality standards. Simply, hiring the right worker for the job available will result to the worker offering high quality services.</p>
<p><b>HR5</b></p>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The recruitment and selection process at the hotel is very methodical since we do not want to fill any vacant with an individual who does not have the required skills and competencies to undertake the different roles and responsibilities under the job. Actually, all applicants who eventually get hired whether for low level jobs or high level jobs have to at least attend two interviews since we want to be certain that we hire the best workers. On a different note, we hire from internal and external even though in most cases, we only hire from external when we cannot be able to fill the position from the internal. The type of job determines the type of hiring process that we carry out. For example, the hiring</p>

	<p>process of a housekeeper is totally different to the hiring process of a marketing manager.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And what type of relationship does the hiring process have with the service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> If employees hired are competent, the chances of these employees offering high service quality are very high while on the other hand, if the hiring process does not necessarily result to competent employees been hired, the chances of the hired employees offering high service quality are low. We so have to do our best and ensure that we hire employees who are competent enough since they are the ones that are most suited to offer high quality services.</p>
HR6	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Any organization understand that the recruitment process can have a major role in determining the success or failure of the business. The same is the case for the hotel since as the HR Manager, I am responsible of ensuring that the hotel recruits the most qualified applicant. We however have different recruitment strategy since for the low level staff, we always try to recruit internally and only embark on recruiting from the external if we cannot find an ideal fit internally. However, for majority of the management posts, we mainly recruit from the outside since we feel that recruiting from the outside makes it possible for us to bring an individual with different perspectives and ideas that could be of great benefit to the hotel. The recruitment process is also different since the nature of the position that we are recruiting for determines the recruitment process. For example, recruitment for positions that have high responsibilities is normally thorough and involves various processes unlike is the case for a low level employee that is normally not very detailed.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> And what kind of relationship does the recruitment process has with the service quality?</p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> Obviously, if we want to maintain our service quality, we have to recruit the best employees since recruiting employees with skills and experiences that we need will end up enhancing the service quality. Imagine hiring a receptionist who has poor customer service skills.....This employee could have devastating impact for the hotel as customers might not be impressed with how he interacts with them and addresses their questions.</p>

Question	What sort of training you provide for the employees and how
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9	would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?
HR1	<p>HR manager: The sector that we operate in keeps changing on regular basis and for that reason, it is crucial that employees are trained on regular basis. So, our hotel always organizes training sessions for all employees. For the low level employees, training is normally carried out in the hotel by the managers while for the managers, they regularly take part in external trainings. Normally, the arrangement is that once the managers have been trained, they can then train the employees that they lead. You might also be surprised to know that we also encourage employees to enhance the skills by enrolling for various courses such as diplomas and even degrees. Indeed, we have one of the HR staff who was initially employed as receptionist but after she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in HR, we hired her as a HR admin.</p> <p>Interviewer: how would you describe the relationship is there between employee training and service quality</p> <p>HR Manager: Well, if employees have been trained on various skills required to execute various roles, the employees are definitely going to be in a better position to execute the roles exceptionally well. So, the training that we offer is closed related to the service quality. For example, when a new meal is introduced in the menu, all the cooks have to be trained on how to prepare the new meal since failure to do that will result to the cooks not being aware of how they are supposed to prepare the new meal. Therefore, without the constant trainings that goes on at the hotel, it would not be possible for us to constantly offer our customers high quality services. In my opinion, training is the most important way to achieve the desired level of service quality.</p>
HR2	<p>HR Manager : All employees working with us undergo thorough training on how they are expected to undertake their jobs. For example, going back to the example of a receptionist, he/she will be trained on how to interact with the customers as well as handle any issues raised by the customers. Moreover, the receptionist will also be trained on how to use the booking system since it is paramount that he/she is able to use the booking systems without any hitches. The same applies for other employees working at the hotel. They all have to undergo trainings to ensure that they have the required skills to complete the work as required. Apart from that, during the annual review of the employee, training requirements are also taken into considerations and when need be, we organize trainings for our employees.</p> <p>Interviewer: What is the type of relationship that exists between the</p>

	<p>trainings and the service quality?</p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> You see by training our employees, we ensure that they have the skills required for them to effectively execute the different roles that they are assigned. So, I can tell you for a fact that the trainings helps enhance the service quality since from the trainings the workers are impacted with the skills needed for them to offer high level services.</p>
<b>HR3</b>	<p><b>HR manager:</b> As already explained to you, we believe in growth and development of the employee and for that reason, we are always conducting trainings for the employees where they get to acquire new skills. Before any employee can start working with us, the employee is expected to go through induction as well as on job training. Thereafter, the head of the respective department that the employee is working in will regularly review the performance of the employee and if needed, organize trainings for the employees.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>What is the relationship between employee training and service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> Trainings gives employees more skills to ensure that they can carry out their roles and responsibilities in the best possible way. So, by employees taking part in the trainings, the chances of the employees offering high level quality service are very very high. You will actually be surprised to know that we have found trainings helps improve customer satisfaction rates.</p>
<b>HR4</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> At our hotel, we understand that employee training is very important for employee training. So, we conduct trainings on regular basis since we want to ensure that all our employees have the necessary skills to ensure that they do their work well. For some employees, trainings are taken outside the hotel and even online while for others, the trainings takes place in the hotel. For example, most of the cooks and even room keepers have their trainings in the hotel while majority of the management teams have trainings outside the hotel.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And what is the nature of the relationship between the trainings and the service quality</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> Trainings gives our workers more knowledge and skills that they require to perform their duties. In that perspective, training and service quality are quite close since the more skills an employee has, the higher the chances of that employee offering high service quality to our customers.</p>
<b>HR5</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> We believe that in order for our employees to grow professionally and at the same time offer our customers great experience at the hotel, we have to constantly train them. So, we</p>



	<p>provide different trainings to our employees. For example, the low level employees such as cooks, housekeepers, waiters, and receptionists get on job trainings while the management staff get various types of trainings. However, I also need to point out that at times, we also send some of our low level employee to external trainers where they are trained on various aspects of their respective jobs as well as how they can do their jobs in a better way. Trainings for other employees can be through the internet , the hotel training rooms, or in external training centres.</p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> Did you ask about the relationship between training and service quality?</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Yes.....what kind of relationship is there between the two?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> The relationship is quite straight forward. Training impact the workers with new knowledge and skills so making it possible for the workers to enhance the service quality that they offer. More trainings means more skills meaning higher service quality.</p>
HR6	

Question10	<p>We all know how difficult is to motivate the employees, how would you describe the incentives and rewards system that the management follow with their employees (specifically, the low level employees)? And, How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality</p>
HR1	<p>HR manager: With low level employees, I hope you imply the cooks, porters, and receptionists who mainly work on shift basis right?</p> <p>Interviewer: Yes</p> <p>HR Manager: Ok....We always try to ensure that all our employees are motivated since we are aware of the fact that without employee motivation, it would be a challenge for the employees to offer high quality services to our clients. So, there are various incentives that we offer to the low level employees. First, we offer them better pay that what other hotels offer. Apart from that we also offer them overtime pay which they like as it makes them earn more. Apart from that, all low level staff who are employed on full time basis get 30days paid holiday and also get health insurance and dental cover. We want to show all our employees that we value them and through such incentives, they</p>

	<p>get to see that we actually value them and consider them to be part of the company. The relationship between incentives, motivation, and quality of the service is that the incentives offered makes the employees to be more motivated and when they are motivated, we have found that they will actually do their best in offering our customers the best service quality. In short, if you want employees to offer high level services, you need to ensure that they employees are motivated and incentives is one of the ways to enhances employee motivation.</p>
HR2	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Le me correct you there  <b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Go ahead please</u>  <b>HR Manager :</b> Contrary to the commonly held perception that it is difficult to motivate the employees, that is not indeed the case. The reason why I am of that view is due to the fact that for the over 20 years that I have worked in various HR departments for various organisations, I have found that employee motivation is quite an easy thing since all you need to do is to have an understanding of the needs and wants of the employees and then ensure that you make it possible for these needs and wants of the employees to be fulfilled by you as an employer. At our hotel, we understand that our employees want to have a good life and our incentive and reward system takes that into consideration by ensuring that we offer our employees good packages that make it possible for them to meet their needs and wants. As far as the relationship between the incentives and reward system and the service quality is concerned, they are directly related since if the employees feel that they are well compensated for their efforts, they are going to be fully motivated in offering the best for the organization. So, I can tell you for a fact that our employees are fully satisfied with the payments and other packages that we offer and as a result, they always strive to do their best for the organization.</p>
HR3	<p><b>HR Manager :</b> We are a five star hotel and for us, motivation for our employees is not as challenging as you think. We offer very good remunerations for our employees and in addition to that, we also offer them additional benefits such as medical cover, dental care, and for the senior management team, they can get to own stocks of the hotel. For the low level employees, they might not be having similar packages as those who are part of the management team, but you will be glad to know that we pay them better than most of the hotels and they also get to earn overtime which makes them work for us for long period of time without seeking new employment.</p>

	<p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And how is that related to service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> The salaries and other benefits that we offer our employees motivates them to give their best for the hotel. By giving their best, the service quality is enhanced. So, good remuneration equals to enhanced motivation which then results to high service quality.</p>
HR4	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> As already explained to you, we pay our workers well and also offer them other extra benefits that they might not get from other employees. So, majority of them are always motivated to do their best for the hotel. Again, we are a five star hotel and that means we are head and shoulders above most of the hotels. So, the rewards and incentive system offered is ideal for our customers and motivates them to give their all to the success of the hotel. On the other hand, the fact that the employees are fully motivated implies that they are happy to apply high service quality. Remember, if our customers are happy, they will even give them tips and that knowledge alone makes the customers to be fully motivated.</p>
HR5	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Its not really that challenging to motivate the employees as many people believe. If you were to apply various theories of motivation, that among others comprise of the one on hierarchy of needs, you can be able to successfully motivate the employees. For our hotel, we always ensure that the compensation that we offer our employees is attractive to them and among the best. We normally consider the experience of an employee and the qualifications when coming up with the compensation packages so that we can come up with a package that will be attractive to all our employees. For low level employees who work odd hours such as during the nights and even on weekends, we offer them special pay for working such hours. Moreover, we also offer them overtime pay when they work overtime.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Seems as if your hotel manages to motivates all employs which is quite commendable. What is connection between employee motivation and service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> When the employees are motivated, they are going to ensure that they give their best for the company. So, high employee motivation means consistent high service quality.</p>
HR6	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Motivation involves the process of stimulating people to actions to accomplish the goals. Scholars such as Taylor, Maslow, Hezberg, and Vroom have developed various theories that we apply at the hotel to effectively motivate our employees. For example, Taylor developed a theory that claimed</p>

	<p>that employees are only motivated by money and I can tell you that the theory is flawed. We mainly motivated our employees by offering them monetary and non-monetary rewards. Actually, we apply Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs to motivate our employees. The various monetary and non-monetary rewards that we offer our employees make them feel valued by the hotel and at the same time makes it possible for them to achieve their various needs. You might be surprised to know that at least 85% of our employees are motivated. I know that since we conduct surveys with our employees.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And how does employee motivation affect the service quality ?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> Motivated employees are going to give their best for the Hotel and that is obviously going to have a positive impact to the service quality.</p>
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Question11	To what extent the hotel applies the job rotation? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?
HR1	<p>HR manager: We do not practice job rotation at our hotel. The reason for that is mainly due to the fact that we want all our employees to be specialists in the various departments that they work in. For example, a receptionist can only become an expert if he/she only works as a receptionist and will be well placed to offer high quality service. However, if you start moving a receptionist to work as a waiter or as a cook, they will even not be motivated and the level of service that they offer will obviously be affected. We so do not practice job rotation at our hotel and I cannot even see that happening in the near future.</p>
HR2	<p>HR Manager: For the low level employees, job rotation at the hotel is not existent since it is just not practical and would actually have negative impact to the service quality. Can you just imagine a cook or even a cleaner been asked to work as a receptionist? It just can't work and would obviously have negative impact to the service quality.</p> <p>Interviewer: What about the management staff? Is job rotation common among the management team?</p> <p>HR Manager: There is some form of job rotation even though not as what you think. For example, we ensure that the HR admins are rotated in order to ensure that they have experiences in</p>

	dealing with various HR issues. But you are not going to find a HR Admin being asked to work as a cook or a waiter. In view of the relationship between job rotation and service, to a certain extent, job rotation helps to enhance service quality since it means that even when an employee who is supposed to do some job is not available, another employee can cover up for him/her.
HR3	<b>HR Manager:</b> Job rotation is only practices in some departments such as HR, bookkeeping, and marketing among others. The reason why that is the case is due to the fact that for some departments, it is just not possible. For instance, it is not possible for employees who are working in the kitchen to be rotated to start working in the Front Office. Similarly, an accountant cannot be rotated to work as a receptionist or even a cook since that would result to employee rotated offering very low service quality. We are aware that job rotation can have negative impacts to the service quality hence the reason the practice is only exercised in within departments where it cannot have any negative impact to the service quality.
HR4	<b>HR Manager:</b> Job rotation is not present in my hotel at all <b>Interviewer:</b> <u>What is the reason behind that?</u> <b>HR Manager:</b> Unless maybe you forgot what job rotation entails, a five star hotel will have enough resources required to employ employees required to undertake various jobs. So, it is not possible for job rotation to be existence in our hotel. Besides, the service quality would be jeopardized since when employees working in one department are moved to another department, they will not be able to offer the high quality service as required.
HR5	<b>HR Manager:</b> Not a lot <b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Why? ...Is it not a good thing for service quality?</u> <b>HR Manager:</b> I don't know if you really understand what job rotation means. It means moving employees from one department to another. For example, moving a kitchen assistant or porter to work at the reception or even moving a HR administrator to work in the housekeeping department. This cannot really work for our hotel and would actually compromise the service quality. So, we do not have job rotation at our hotel as it is just not practical.
HR6	<b>HR Manager:</b> Job rotation is not something that we really advocate for in the hotel since it is just not possible to rotate the employees without having negative impacts to the service quality. For example, imagine having a waiter been rotated to work in the HR department? It will not work and will negatively impact the service quality.

Question12	<p>How would you describe the promotion system that provided by the management to the employees? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?</p>
HR1	<p><b>HR manager:</b> At our hotel, we believe in growth of employees that can only be proved by the promotion offered. Every year, we conduct performance review that can also be referred to as appraisal of every employee. During the reviews, the employees are given the opportunity to explain their career growth and the HR staff conducting the appraisal can then inform the employee what the employee needs to do or areas that needs improvement so that the employee can be promoted. So, when there is a chance for promotion, the employees are promoted according to their performances and qualifications.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> So how would you describe the relationship between the promotion system and service quality</p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> Well, all employees know that their performance plays a major role in determining their promotion. Therefore, employees always strive to ensure that they offer the best service since by doing that they will be enhancing their promotion chances.</p>
HR2	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> At the hotel we advocate for the growth and professional development of all our employees through promotions as well as trainings of the employees. We are an equal opportunity employer and whenever there is a promotion opportunity, we ensure that we are fair and that the employee who ends up been promoted is actually the employee who is most qualified for the job.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> And how does that affect service quality?</p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> All our employees know that their performance determine their promotion and for that reason, I can say that promotion helps enhance the service quality since employees are aware of the fact that if they want to get promoted, they have to offer high quality services to our customers since even then feedback given by the customers is taken into consideration when deciding on the employee who will end up been hired.</p>
HR3	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The promotion system that is offered to the employees of the hotel to the employees is very fair since the</p>

	<p>hotel always ensures that all employees irrespective of their backgrounds are given a fair chance. So, whenever there is a promotion opportunity, various factors are taken into consideration in order to determine the employee who deserves to be promoted. Among others, some of the factors that come into play when deciding on the employee who is to be promoted comprises of: duration of employment with the hotel, achievements during the time the employee has been working with us, and performance record.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>What is the relationship between promotion and service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> The employees are aware of the fact if they perform their duties well over a period of time, they will eventually be promoted. So, they are always doing their best to offer the best service quality that they can in order to enhance their chances of being promoted.</p>
HR4	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The promotion system is fair. The hotel believes in equality and every employee is given an equal and fair chance when it comes to promotion. We do that since we have in the past come to know that if any employee get to feel that the promotion was not fair or was discriminatory to him/her, the chances of this employee offering high quality service are low.</p>
HR5	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The promotion system offered to the employees is always fair and actually promotes employee growth in the company. Among other factors that come into consideration when we are thinking about the employees that we are going to promote entails the performance of the employees, their achievements, and the duration of time that the employees have worked for us. Promotion is done on fair basis since we do not want any employee to feel that they have been discriminated when considering the employee that we are going to promote.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> When done fairly, promotion opportunities motivates the employees to do their best and offer the best service quality as they are aware of the fact that their past performance will go a long way in determining whether they will be promoted or not.</p>
HR6	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> We have a very fair promotion policy as our employees are promoted on the basis of their performances and duration of time that they have worked with us as well as the qualifications that they possess. We want to ensure that all employees are given the opportunity to be promoted and that</p>

	motivates them to offer the best service quality since they are sure that the nature of the quality of their services is crucial in determining whether they get to be promoted or not.
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Question 13	<u>In your experience, how would you describe HR practices (selection and recruitment, training and development, rewards and incentives, and internal career opportunity) as a bundle? Do you deal with them as one set that completing each others? Or do you deal with each one separately? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality? Explain in details and provide professional answer.</u>
HR1	<b>HR Manager :</b> When coming up with various HR practices, there are various things that are taken into consideration. <b>Even though you might get the impressions that we consider the policies as a bundle, that is never the case.</b> Actually, when we are developing the policies, we need to get a balance between getting the best employees, ensuring that they are retained for the longest time possible, and at the same time offer them the best working conditions as well as a remuneration package that makes them motivated. <b>Therefore, the HR practices are considered as a bundle and at times each policy on its own.</b> The HR practices are intended at ensuring that the human resources are effectively managed and from that perspective, <b>it is clear that they have a major impact to the quality of the service</b> since if they are not effective, it will be hard for employees to be motivated and that will eventually have negative impact on the quality of the service offered.
HR2	<b>HR Manager:</b> We do not consider these as a package at all. If its recruitment, we first recruit, then profile our employees later on to find out the training requirements needs. However, I personally feel that it would be much better if we were to consider these the various HR policies and practices as a bundle since that would help to enhance the performance of the employees which would then help enhance service quality. For example, if training needs of an employee was to be considered at the time of recruitment, there is a high chance that the quality of the service offered by the employee will be high. However, it is easier said than done. We have actually thought about this approach in the past but have ended up doing away with it since we found that it could end up being quite complicated and in the end not achieve the desired results.
HR3	<b>HR Manager:</b> That is somehow a tricky question as its not quite clear and I even don't think that it is practical. As HR department,



	<p>we are in charge of all aspects of management of the employees and I so do not see how one aspect such as Payroll can be isolated from another aspect such as employee skills since the skills and experience of the employee determines the salary that we offer the employee. So, the practices are directly related with the service quality and cannot be isolated as you suggested.</p>
HR4	<p><b>HR manager:</b> The HR practices you mentioned are a bundle. Any HR expert will tell you that they are indeed a bundle and that they are strongly linked to one another. You just cannot work on any of the practice on its own. For instance, when recruiting the employees, you need to consider the skills of the employee as well as the salary expectations of the employee. You cannot recruit the employee and then start considering about the skills and the salary to be paid to the employee after he has been recruited. So, the various HR policies work together and are closely linked with one another. It would be impossible to separate them.</p>
HR5	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> You have to consider HR practices together. For example, a vacant job determines the type of skills and competencies needed to fill the vacant post. On the other hand, the skills and experiences of the hired individual determines the trainings to be arranged for the employee. So, these things are closed connected and cannot be separated.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> Well, in order for the employees of the hotel to be able to offer high service quality, they need to have the required skills and competencies to do so and also be highly motivated. So, when the hotel develops effective HR practice the high service quality that the hotel always aims to offer will almost be guaranteed at all times.</p>
HR6	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> They are all a bundle and cannot be separated. It is just not possible to separate them since that would not work. For example, the skills and experience of an employee determines the salary to be offered you cannot offer an employee a salary and other benefits without having an understanding of what the employee can offer. On the other hand, the bundle is closely related to the service quality since better HR policies are going to improve employee motivation and that will in the end have positive impact to the service quality.</p>

## **7.2 Appendix 2: Supervisors Interview**

**Question 1:** Please explain briefly about your background and experience in this industry.

**Question 2:** Why did you choose to work in this hotel? Explain as much as possible here?

**Question 3:** What service quality means to you in your hotel? How and why it is important?

**Question 4:** In your opinion, what factors should be taken into account when applying high level of service quality in the Front Office? And why?

**Question 5:** To what extent your hotel follows specific standards when applying high service quality? And why / How?

**Question 6:** How would you describe your experience of applying high service quality in your hotel? Is there any difficulties or problems?

**Question 7:** How would you describe the recruitment and selection process in this hotel and how would you describe the relationship between them and the service quality?

**Question 8:** What sort of training you had/have in the hotel and how would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question 9:** How would you describe the incentives and rewards system provided by the hotel management? And, how would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question 10:** To what extent the hotel management applies the job rotation? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question 11:** What is your opinion on the job description and how would you describe the relationship between the job description and the service quality?

**Question 12:** How would you describe the promotion system in your hotel and how easy to get promoted here? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

## **7.3 Appendix 3: Non- Managers Staff Interview**

**Question 1:** Please explain briefly about your background and experience in this industry.

**Question 2:** Why did you choose to work in this hotel? Explain as much as possible here?

**Question 3:** What service quality means to you in your hotel? How and why it is important?

**Question 4:** In your opinion, what factors should be taken into account when applying high level of service quality in the Front Office? And why?

**Question 5:** To what extent your hotel follows specific standards when applying high service quality? And why / How?

**Question 6:** How would you describe your experience of applying high service quality in your hotel? Is there any difficulties or problems?

**Question 7:** How would you describe the recruitment and selection process in this hotel and how would you describe the relationship between them and the service quality?

**Question 8:** What sort of training you had/have in the hotel and how would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question 9:** How would you describe the incentives and rewards system provided by the hotel management? And, how would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question 10:** To what extent the hotel management applies the job rotation? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

**Question 11:** What is your opinion on the job description and how would you describe the relationship between the job description and the service quality?

**Question 12:** How would you describe the promotion system in your hotel and how easy to get promoted here? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?

#### **7.4 Appendix 4: Interview Consent Form**

Research project title:

The Evaluation of Relationship between Human Resources Practices and Service Quality: An Empirical Investigation in the Canadian Hotels Industry

Research investigator: **Osama Khassawneh**

The interview will take about 1 – 1.5 hour. We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated

with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from UK institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced.
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed by (Osama Khassawneh) as research investigator.
- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to (Osama Khassawneh) and academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process.
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymised so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed.
  - All or part of the content of your interview may be used;
    - In academic papers, policy papers or news articles
    - On our website and in other media that we may produce such as spoken presentations
    - On other feedback events
    - In an archive of the project as noted above

By signing this form, I agree that;

- ✓ I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
- ✓ The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;

- ✓ I have read the Information sheet;
- ✓ I don't expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
- ✓ I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview and may make edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality;
- ✓ I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Participants Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researchers Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> \_\_\_\_\_

## 7.5 Appendix 5: Hotel Documents Sample

Richey Benchmark Food Beverage			
Standards	Yes	No	Comment
<b>BREAKFAST</b>			
Guest greeted within 30 seconds of arriving at door (N/A if self seating)			
Guest is seated within 1 minute of arrival (N/A if self seating)			
If waiting line, progress appears efficient			
Extra place settings removed			
Guest offered a beverage (other than water) within 1 minute of seating			
Guest is served beverage within 3 minutes of seating			
Accompaniments are suggested; i.e., juice, fruit at breakfast; starters, desserts at other times			
Staff can helpfully discuss details of beverages			
Staff can helpfully discuss details of foods			
After ordering breakfast: Hot food served in 10 minutes: Cold food served in 7 minutes			
Condiments served or offered simultaneously with (or before) the food			
Correct foods and drinks served to the correct guest without asking			
Additional coffee, tea or other beverage offered within 1 minute of empty cup/glass			
Additional hot water offered with tea at appropriate time			
Staff inquires about guest satisfaction discreetly, not more than twice			
Bill is presented automatically, or within 1 minute of request			
Bill is presented in folder (or equivalent) with clean, appropriate pen			
Payment is collected and processed within 4 minutes of guest making payment or signing			
Correct change is returned, if required			
Receipt provided for cash payment			
Staff specifically thanks guest			
Verbal price quote is accurate			
Bill is legible			
Bill is machine imprinted when presented			
Bill is accurately itemized and totalled			
Time stamp and date accurately printed on bill (N/A if no time stamp)			
Charge is properly posted to account			
Cash transaction reported properly (n/a if no audit completed)			
Pace of meal is convenient and appropriate			
If buffets or trolleys are featured, are they mentioned verbally by staff			
If specials are offered, are they adequately promoted verbally or otherwise			
Vacated tables swiftly cleared			
Staff maintains attentive position in dining room			
Staff speaks clearly			
Staff makes eye contact			
Staff smiles or makes pleasant expression			
Staff uses guest surname, when available			
All staff have discreet, non-interruptive demeanor			
Children are acknowledged and greeted individually			
Staff behavior is not hectic or chaotic			
Staff does not eat, drink, smoke or chew gum			
Staff does not engage in distracting personal chat or horseplay			
Staff does not hover or linger intrusively near table			
Staff does not keep hands in pockets, folded arms, or slouching posture			
Did there appear to be an individual acting as a supervisor visible			

## The How To's Defined

Our working definition of ***How To's of Guest Service*** is the specific method for completing every task in each department. All guests will receive this level of job performance, regardless of:

- what the guest requests
- the time of day
- any staffing, personnel or personal problems.

### 1. **UNDERSTAND** that:

- a) If you are not directly serving a guest, then you are assisting the person who is serving the guest.
- b) The ***How To's of Guest Service*** are non-negotiable.
- c) The only person who can change the ***How To's of Guest Service*** is the guest - **not** the manager, or any employee.
- d) The ***How To's of Guest Service*** are based on the concept and the goals of the Department, the Hotel and the Company.
- e) Implementation of ***How To's of Guest Service*** is necessary for our success and must be achieved 100% of the time, for 100% of our guests.

### 2. **REMEMBER** that:

- a) A ***How To's of Guest Service*** is written to ensure that we consistently meet the guest's needs, and not the employee's needs.
- b) If you have a better way to meet our guests' needs, you can change a ***How To's of Guest Service*** by presenting your idea to your manager. If the change is approved, all employees will be informed of the change.

Business  
Do's & Don'ts

Centre

Do's

1. Smile at the guest – it makes a lasting impression.
2. Use the guest's name – this gives a sense of belonging and recognition.
3. Give your undivided attention to each guest.
4. Have a positive attitude – even in difficult situations.
5. Work efficiently and professionally.
6. Anticipate guest's needs.
7. Use proper verbiage and descriptive words.
8. Communicate with team members when you need assistance.
9. Take ownership of guest requests and complaints.
10. Always be neatly presented and comply with grooming guidelines.

Don'ts

1. Say "NO."
2. Ignore guests when you are on the telephone – acknowledge them with a smile and eye contact.
3. Argue with a guest.
4. Be pretentious when talking to a guest – be natural but courteous.
5. Congregate in group talking.
6. Move slowly – it looks terrible.
7. Ever say "that's not my job" – give the guest the impression that you care and will assist them.
8. Come to work with a poor attitude – guests will notice it and your co-workers hate it.
9. Ignore instructions from your supervisors/managers.



- How to's
- Check-in

**Note:**

- All of the items that are **bolded** under a **TASK** are Core Standards.
- All the phrases that are in *italics* are recommended phrases to use.

**TASK 1. ACKNOWLEDGE THE GUEST WITH A SMILE AND APPROPRIATE GREETING**

- Staff will actively greet guests, smile and speak clearly in a friendly manner.** All guests entering the business center must be greeted within 30 seconds of their arrival.
- Staff will make eye contact, even in passing, with an acknowledgement.**
- Staff will always appear clean, crisp, well groomed and fitted.** The appearance of the attendant must at all times be professional.
- If you are busy assisting a guest and another guest requires your assistance, it is important that you make eye contact with the person, smile and say, *“I will be with you shortly.”* If the guest's name is known, the phrase should be, *“Mr. James, I will be with you shortly.”*
- If you anticipate that the task you are working on with the other guest will take some time, excuse yourself, then contact a supervisor or manager to assist the guest waiting. The verbiage to the guest you are working with should be, *“Mr. Smith, Please excuse me for a few minutes while I obtain some assistance for the other guest.”*
- If the business center becomes busy, it is the business center attendant's responsibility to ask the appropriate individuals for assistance to ensure that all guests are taken care of in an appropriate time frame.
- The business center attendant on duty should know in advance who will be able perform business center tasks and know how to reach these individuals in case of a “crunch.”

**TASK 2. ASCERTAIN GUEST'S NAME AND ROOM NUMBER**

- The Business Center is available to all registered hotel guests.
- When a guest enters the Business Center, the attendant on duty should initiate service, using the guest's name, if known, establish eye contact and greet the guest with the proper salutation for the time of the day. If the guest arrives in the afternoon, the proper salutation should be, *“Good afternoon, Mr. James, how may I assist you?”*
- After greeting the guest properly, the attendant should obtain the name and room number of the guest if not known from previous business center usage.
- Casual language like “Hi” should never be used with a guest, and no guest should be addressed by his or her first name, even if the guest is well known to the staff member.

**TASK 3. DETERMINE GUEST'S NEEDS**

- a) When possible, anticipate the needs of the guest.
- b) If the guest entering the Business Center is holding a fax in his/her hand, the appropriate salutation would be, *Good afternoon, may I assist you in sending the fax?* All staff members should anticipate a guest needs whenever possible.
- c) When dealing with guests, the attendant must at all times be aware that conversations between the business center attendant and the guest can be overheard by other guests and other staff members who are in the business center. It is, therefore, extremely important to keep the voice level where conversations can be kept private and confidential. This is especially important when we are dealing with high profile guests. Some of our guests will be registered under assumed names, and confidentiality is, therefore, very important in order to maintain their "not registered" status.
- d) When conversing with a guest, the dialog should **be attentive and natural**. **Pretension** and an overbearing attitude should never be used with a guest.

**TASK 4. ADVISE GUEST OF SERVICES AND BILLING CHARGES AND ESTABLISH METHOD OF PAYMENT FOR SERVICES RENDERED**

- a) Once you have established what services the guest requires, inform the guest of charges. Showing the guest an explanation form while explaining verbally should do this.
- b) Once the guest understands and agrees to the charges, ask the guest; "Would you like all charges billed to your room?" Other options include master account, credit card and cash.
- c) Make a note of payment method on charge slip and continue to assist the guest. Do not make the guest wait while you fill out a form if they are needing further assistance.

**TASK 5. ASSIST GUEST WITH ANY EQUIPMENT NEEDS**

- a) If the guest is using a piece of equipment within the Business Center, assist them with usage.
- b) Ensure the guest feels comfortable on how to use any equipment. Always explain, demonstrate and then watch the guest use the equipment before walking away.
- c) To ensure the guest is comfortable using the equipment you may ask them a question. Example, "Do you need assistance with connecting to your e-mail?"

**TASK 6. FOLLOW UP WITH GUEST WHO ARE IN THE BUSINESS CENTER LONGER THAN 20 MINUTES**

- a) Any guest who is in the Business Center longer than 20 minutes you should check on. This is just to ensure the guest is feeling comfortable with the equipment and surrounding environment.
- b) To follow-up, you may ask the guest, "Is there anything else I can bring for you?" or, "How are you doing on the computer?"

**TASK 7. BID THE GUEST FAREWELL USING THEIR NAME**

- a) It is the responsibility of all employees to bid the guest farewell by using their name if known.
- b) Since many guest who use the Business Center are asked their name, there should be a system in place to refer to the name while a guest is using the center.

**TASK 8. WHEN REQUIRED, FOLLOW-UP ON SERVICES AT GIVEN TIME**

- a) **If a follow-up call or task is required, then an accurate estimate of completion time will be given, and met.**
- b) If the task can be performed immediately, the guest should be given a specific time for completion. If Mr. Smith requires 2 pages to be typed, the verbiage should be, "*Mr. Smith, I will have the job completed in 30 minutes. Should I sent the completed job back to your room or leave it for pick-up from the business center?*"
- c) If the task requires extensive research and the time element will be hard to assess, the guest should be told "*I will contact you later this afternoon with an update on the project*" or "*I will get back with you later this evening with an update on the project.*"

**TASK 9. COMPUTER PROCEDURES**

- a) Advise guest of computer options
  - The business center attendant on duty must have working knowledge of all software programs available for guest usage.
  - The attendant should then establish if the guest prefers to work on a PC or a Laptop, and the type of software needed for the job to ensure that that the program is available on the requested computer.
  - Four premium brand desktop computer stations will be set up and equipped with major software to include the latest versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, WordPerfect, Lotus 1-2-3 and WinZip (at t minimum.)
  - If the program is not available on the computer, the attendant on duty will be able to load the requested program. The attendant on duty will also be able to scan external documents for viruses, if needed.
  - If a guest requires assistance beyond the attendant's knowledge, the attendant must know how to obtain support from other individuals within the organization (ie. IT

employees). The support people available to assist must be identified in advance with proper telephone and page numbers available 24 hours a day to eliminate a “crisis” situation.

b) Advise guest of billing charges

- The guest must be informed of all charges pertaining to the job. If the guests are asking to hook-up a lap top computer and make 20 printouts from the laser printer, the verbiage should be, *“Mr. Smith, laser printouts are two pounds per page. Should I post the charge to your room bill or to settle it cash?”*
- Check to see if the guest would like a complimentary tea/coffee. If so, proceed to the kitchenette and prepare it. A procedure will be sat for delivering dirty cups/glasses against receiving clean ones.

c) Establish guest's level of computer knowledge and assist if needed

- If a guest requires a special project to be completed by the attendant, the attendant will listen carefully and patiently to all requests and ask questions as needed in order to determine the guest's full and complete needs.
- Staff will be able to assist in accessing basic software programs and in connecting printers, scanners, modem and high speed access lines and, if necessary, changing access settings on the guest's computer.
- Staff will be able to load requested programs for guests and scan external documents for viruses.
- If the guest is using a laptop computer, show the guest where the plug-ins are located. The business center attendant will be able to assist in accessing basic programs and in connecting printers, scanners, modem and high speed access lines, and, if necessary, changing access settings on the guest's computer.
- Opening a File from a Diskette or a CD  
Insert your diskette into the A-Drive (for a floppy disk) or the D-drive for a CD
  - i) Double click on the My Computer Icon
  - ii) Scroll until the appropriate drive appears, double click and the program will open
  - iii) Your file will automatically open under the proper program

- d) Staff will be knowledgeable about various local and long-distance e-mail and Internet Service Providers and how to access them.
- Many guests using the Business Center are obtaining e-mails or “surfing” the Net.
  - There will be high speed access facility for guests to quickly download e-mail or access the Internet.
  - The attendant of duty must know how to log a guest onto the Internet. Most XXX Hotels are set up with the XXX Resorts Home Page as the default page.
  - Double click on the Internet Icon and the home page will appear.
  - Go to address on top of the screen and type in your E-mail account name after the http://www. If you are currently using Yahoo, the address would be www.yahoo.com. The XXX home page address is http://www.-----.com. The XXX home page will be the default one.
  - Always be sure that restricted telephone lines are opened for a guest using a lap-top computer before you leave the workspace. In order to do so, contact the operator on duty and give him/her the telephone extension you are calling from and the name and room number of the guest. When the guest leaves the workspace, the operator should be contacted so the phone can be restricted again.
- e) Diskettes and patch cords must be available at all times for guest use or purchase
- Diskettes, patch cords and a limited selection of basic office supplies will be available for loan or purchase (paper clips, writing pads, writing utensils, etc)
  - It is the duty of the business center attendant to ensure that the business center is properly stocked with all items necessary to properly assist a guest. A minimum par stock should be maintained at all times to ensure that the guest's needs are met.
  - Table cards – small and large
  - Diskettes – PC and ZIP disks
  - Assortment of paper clips
  - Note pads and pens

## **TASK 10. FAXING**

- a) Administrative support should include photo copying, collating faxing, word processing and facilitating conference call arrangements, Easy access to external vendors for courier services, telecommunication rental equipment and printing services should also be facilitated.
- b) Check with the guest to see if a facsimile cover sheet is needed. If so, have the guest fill out the form.
- c) After receiving the fax from the guest, check to see that the fax number is readable.

- d) Check to see that the name and room number is on the fax.
- e) Inform the guest of the fax charges, and establish if the fax should be billed to the room or to a master account. *"Mr. Smith, May I bill the charges to your room or to a master account?"*
- f) If the guest do not wish to wait for the fax confirmation, the verbiage should be, *"Should I send the fax and fax confirmation back to your room or leave it for pick-up from the business center?"*
- g) Before putting the fax onto the machine, ensure that the pages are not stapled or creased.
- h) Record the charge onto a charge slip for processing to room or master account.

#### **TASK 11. PHOTOCOPYING**

- a) Ask the guest how many copies he/she would like.
- b) If sets of copies are made, ask the guest if the copies should be stapled or paper clipped.
- c) Obtain the name and room number of the guest.
- d) Inform the guest of the charges.
- e) Ask the guest if the amount should be charged to the room or to a master account.
- f) Establish when the guest needs the copies returned.
- g) If the guest do not wish to wait for the copies, the verbiage should be, *"Should I send the copies back to your room or leave it for pick-up from the business center?"*
- h) Prepare a charge slip and process the amount of the charge
- i) Always check to see that copies are not stapled together before starting the job.

## **ADDITIONAL HOW TO'S**

### **TASK 12. TELEPHONE PROCEDURES**

- a) **Telephones must be answered before the 4<sup>th</sup> ring, no hold longer than 15 seconds; or, in the case of longer holds, call-backs offered, then provided in less than three minutes.**
- b) **Staff on telephone will sound calm and organized, giving the guest an unhurried impression.**
- c) All front of the house and back of the house telephones will be answered as follows:
  - *"Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening"*
  - Give the name of your department.
  - Give your own name.
- d) **Staff will create a sense of recognition by using the guest's name, when known, in a natural and discreet manner.** Telephones in our hotels display the guests' names in which case you should use the name a minimum of twice while talking with a guest.
- e) It is everyone's responsibility to answer a telephone, even if the designated person is not available. Ask if you can put the caller on hold and wait for a response before doing so.
- f) If you are dealing with a guest face-to-face and the telephone rings, excuse yourself, answer the telephone, and ask the caller to hold until you have finished with the guest. Remember, the guest in person takes precedent over a telephone caller. When you return to the telephone caller, thank them for waiting.
- g) Offer to call the telephone caller back if he/she has been on hold for more than 15 seconds, or if you anticipate a long hold time. Call back must be done within 3 minutes.
- h) When a call needs to be transferred, ensure that you are connecting the caller to the correct department the first time. If unsure of where to transfer the caller, take the caller's number and inform them that they will be contacted as soon as possible.
- i) If the person being called is unavailable, tell the caller, "He/she has stepped away for a moment", or "He/she is with a guest". Do not say, "I do not know where he/she is", or "He/she is in a meeting".
- j) Under no circumstances is a telephone call to be screened by asking: "Who's calling?"
- k) If there is a call for a guest while they are using services in your department, do not assume that the guest wants to take the call. Tell the caller you will check to see if the guest is available, and then give your guest the option of taking or refusing the call.
- l) If the call is for a staff member in the hotel who has voicemail, you must offer the options of a hand written message or voicemail.
- m) When the call is completed, let the caller hang up first.

### **TASK 13. HANDLING A CHALLENGING GUEST REQUEST**

- a) We will attempt to accommodate any reasonable request that a guest makes.

- b) Remember Golden Habit #2; always answer with a yes. No matter what a guest or colleague asks of you, or whether you can meet the demand or not, acknowledge the request and provide a positive attitude.
- c) When a guest asks for something we do not have or is difficult to provide, follow these basic steps:
- Listen carefully to what the guest is saying;
  - Begin with a positive attitude, empathize;
  - Ask questions when appropriate;
  - Offer options;
  - Let guest select solution; and
  - Involve \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_ manager.
- d) Below are examples of the steps listed above:
- A guest requests a reservation at a restaurant that is closed for remodeling:
    - i) *"I apologize; unfortunately we cannot make a reservation at that particular restaurant for you as it is currently under construction. May I make a reservation at either Restaurant X or Restaurant Y for you? Both are very good and very similar to your original request."*
  - A guest complains to you that he has waited too long for a roll-away bed delivery to his room.
    - i) *"I apologize. I can see you are upset with the length of time you have waited for your delivery. It will be approximately three minutes longer. You can feel free to leave your room and we will take care of the placement of the bed for you or you may continue to wait and we will be there in just a few moments."*
  - A guest requests a massage at the spa and the massage schedule is completely full on that particular day.
    - i) *"My apologizes. Unfortunately our massage schedule is full for the day. May I recommend another spa treatment that is very relaxing such as a facial or a \_\_\_\_\_? Can I make a reservation for a massage on another day for you?"*
    - ii) Ensure the options you provide are comparable in price.
- e) Remember to involve your manager about a complaint you have received within three minutes.
- f) **In the event of a specific complaint, the employee receiving it will listen carefully, sympathetically, apologize and advise the guest what actions will be taken, and**



**when.**

- g) **If a problem involves a response by other employees, all details will be carefully relayed, so that it is never necessary for the guest to repeat himself.**
- h) **Managers are involved in each complaint to ensure satisfaction and completion.**

#### **TASK 14. INTERACTING WITH A GUEST**

- a) When interacting with a guest, appropriate and professional communication skills should be used. All employees should be aware of their body language, tone of voice and the words they use when communicating with a guest.
- b) Words that are service positive and make a guest feel comfortable include:
  - *Please*
  - *Thank You*
  - *Excuse Me*
  - *May I help you?*
  - *Yes Sir/Madam, and*
  - *Certainly.*
- c) Avoid the use of slang expressions, specifically those associated with the hospitality industry or your department. For example, refrain from saying to a guest, "Please use your DND" Instead, you might say, "please hang your 'do-not-disturb' tag on the outside of your door to request that housekeeping return at a later time."
- d) It is inappropriate to express to guests any negative opinions you may have about the rooms, hotel or other guests. You should always speak with a positive attitude when sharing information with the guests. An example is if a guest asks you about an item in the room, a positive answer would be, "*All the items in the room are selected with great care in hopes that your stay will be as comfortable as possible.*" Avoid making comments such as, "*Many guests complain about the size of the television.*"
- e) Every effort is made to learn and use the guest's surname. In all Rooms Division outlets a name usage system is to be established and used. It is appropriate to use the guest name as often as possible while still sounding natural. When on the telephone, the guest name should be used a minimum of 2 times.
- f) There are words or phrases we avoid using to prevent a guest from becoming angry or upset with service. Choose other words that are appropriate:
  - "*No*" – There are times we are unable to complete a guest request, however we should not use the word 'no.' Instead you may say, "*I apologize Mr. Smith, unfortunately reservations at that time are not available. What I can offer you is either a reservation at another time or accommodations at another venue.*"

- *"I don't know"* - If you use this phrase it will make you appear that you are not knowledgeable. A better phrase to say is, *"I will find out for you."* Ensure that the information you give the guest is accurate.
  - *"That is not my job," or "This is not my area."* – When a guest asks a simple a request, you are to take ownership and not refer the guest elsewhere. You should say, *"Let me check for you and I will come back with the answer."* If you know you can complete the request say, *"It will be my pleasure to do that for you."*
  - *"We do not do that."* – Guests will request something that we cannot do, however select the words and phrases that are appropriate to the situation. A positive phrase is, *"I apologize Mr. Smith. I would like to be able to give you what you have requested however we are unable to. Would you be interested in ...."* When possible provide two options to give the guest a choice.
- g) When interacting with a guest, always give them your full attention. Establish good eye contact and listen carefully. Paraphrasing and asking questions will demonstrate to the guest that you care and understand what they are saying.
- h) Do not say, "yes" if you do not understand the guest. This will cause further embarrassment for you and frustrate the guest who may have to explain or repeat a request to another employee. If you do not understand, it is better to say, *"I apologize, I do not understand. Let me get my manager."*
- i) When a guest asks for directions, do not point the way with your finger. When you gesture a direction, use an underhand motion pointing with hand. If time permits, walk the guest in the direction he/she has asked.
- j) All guest contact staff will be able to answer basic questions about the property will take ownership of simple requests, and not simply refer guests elsewhere.
- k) Avoid giving an excuse to the guest, even if it is true. An example would be if you have not serviced a guest's room and an attendant has called off sick. You are not allowed to say, *"Mr. Smith, I apologize for the housekeeping delay. It is very busy today and an attendant called in sick."* The guest will not care about what is causing the delay. What they want is their room serviced. It is more appropriate to say, *"I apologize for the delay Mr. Smith. I will have your room serviced in a few moments."*

## **TASK 15. DISCLOSURE OF GUEST INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC/MEDIA**

- a) Guests to our hotels and resorts value their privacy and look to us to protect their guest stays from media intrusion, public inquiries, demands and other interruptions. Numerous policies exist with this safeguard in mind (i.e., reference telephone policy, no room numbers, no release of guest folios, etc). The public demand for information about all aspects of a well-known guest's life make it all the more difficult for the hotels and resorts to protect these individuals' need for privacy. NO information, however minute, can be given or leaked to the media or outsider - before, during or after - any guest's stay. The General Manager or his/her designated assistant must handle all media, general public requests and inquiries.
- b) Deceased celebrities are represented by their estates and whatever rights the deceased had, are assumed by his/her Estate (i.e., to sue or to be sued). Our policy, therefore, should not be altered by the death of the celebrity.

**TASK 16. PROPER BEHAVIOR FOR ALL STAFF**

- a) While working, interacting with guests, or even when you are in the back-of-the-house, smile, make eye contact and speak friendly. Treat internal and external guests the same way you would want to be treated.
- b) We do not touch guests unless administering CPR or the Heimlich Maneuver. Even if the guest appears familiar and you want to handshake or hug them, the only time you may do this is when the guest initiates the movement.
- c) Body language makes the first impression when a guest sees you. Avoid poor body language such as leaning on walls or furniture, hands in your pocket, touching your face or hair and not yielding the right of way when you cross paths. The guest may perceive you as lazy, rude and not caring.

**TASK 17. THE TOP 10 WAYS TO AVOID SAYING “NO”**

- \_\_\_\_\_ is unavailable today. What I can offer you is either \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
- Please let me check for you and I will be back with an answer.
- Unfortunately I am unable to fulfill your request. I have other options.
- I apologize that we cannot provide you with \_\_\_\_\_. If you would like, I will try to make it available tomorrow. Would you be interested?
- I would like to fulfill your request. Unfortunately I am unable to at this time.
- I understand you would like to have \_\_\_\_\_. What I can offer you is \_\_\_\_\_.
- It will take me some time to arrange for your request. For the moment I am able to provide you with \_\_\_\_\_.
- Let me help you find another venue that can accommodate your request.
- Have you tried \_\_\_\_\_. It is quite similar to what you are requesting.
- May I suggest an alternative for you?

## 7.6 Appendix 6: Interview Transcripts Samples.

### Lower Level Employees

Question1	<u>Please explain briefly about your background and experience in this industry</u>
Receptionist 1	<p><b>Receptionist :</b> Well....I don't think that I need to specify my age but as you can probably tell, I have been working in the sector for over twenty years.</p> <p>Nevertheless, I have worked for my current employer for the last six years. I feel that it is also important I point that I have worked in other capacities during the time that I have been working in the hospitality sector. Actually, I started as a room keeper and then enrolled for some courses and got some training resulting to me working as a receptionist. During the twenty years that I have worked in the sector, I have learnt a lot and even though I have now been only working as a receptionist, I believe I have acquired ample experience and skills that would make it possible for me to work as a reservations manager or even head of housekeeping among others. For the last six years, I have worked as a receptionist and I am mainly responsible for welcoming guests, making reservations, and ensuring that all their needs and requests are attended to so that they have a good time at the hotel. For example, when an employee phones the reception and asks for extra sheets, I have to liaise with the housekeeping department and ensure that the sheets are delivered to the guest.</p>

Receptionist 2	<p><b>Receptionist:</b> I am working as receptionist in the hotel. As you can see, I am young and I just finished school last year. I just thought of working for sometime before going to university. As a receptionist, I handle bookings and ensure that I carry out the necessary procedures when guests check in and check out of the hotel. I am also mandated to ensure that any issues that guests have are addressed. For example, if a guest has a baby and asks for a baby coat, I have to follow up and ensure that the baby coat was provided to the guest.</p>
Receptionist 3	<p><b>Receptionist:</b> I just immigrated to Canada a few months ago. I was working as sales manager in back home but when I arrived to Canada I started looking at survivor job and I found it interesting to work at 5 stars hotel as a receptionist. I am still on probation period but I am enjoying it here and people are friendly in Canada which make it easier for me to communicate with them.</p>
Receptionist 4	<p><b>Receptionist:</b> I am a part-time worker in this hotel. Basically, I am a student who needs to manage his funds and gain some experience that can benefit me after my graduation. And obviously, experience from 5 Star hotel, will give a boost to my career after my graduation. My experience with this hotel is fair enough, I really can't complain about my wages or shift as I am a part time worker in fact I am grateful to the management for hiring me on part time basis.</p>
Receptionist 5	<p><b>Receptionist:</b> I have been working at this place past 5 years now. Earlier I was working with another hotel where I was not satisfied with my salary so I joined this hotel. I have been through all the ups and down of the job cycle. Being married and working in a 24-hour rotating shift is a bit too much for me. I have</p>

	to manage my routine according to my shifts and this sometimes leads my family to be annoyed which de-motivates me which is clearly reflected on my job.
Receptionist 6	<b>Receptionist:</b> Being a lady and working at a hotel is both good and bad. I have worked here for almost two and half years. There were a lot of mixed reactions and emotions you can say. Earlier the working environment was not safe for me, I mean there was harassment for me, so the management took action and changed the previous staff, which really encourages me to work for them and also be loyal to my job.

Question3	<u>What service quality means to you in your hotel? How and why it is important</u>
Receptionist1	<b>Receptionist :</b> In the hotel that I work at, service quality entails the views and opinions that the customers have regarding the services that are offered by the hotel. To put it in another way, in the hotel I work for, quality service implies supreme quality that is the best that is available in any given hotel. In order for the hotel to ensure that the customers coming to the hotel get good service quality, the hotel always ensures that employees are thoroughly trained on how to offer quality service on regular basis. Moreover, you might be surprised to hear that in my current workplace, there is a quality department whose main responsibility is to ensure that the services offered are of high quality. Among others, some of the aspects considered when gauging the quality of the service offered entails; whether the service is provided in a timely manner, the varieties

	<p>of choices that are made available to the customers, and the feedback that the customers give pertaining to the services that they receive. For example, if it takes half an hour to book in a guest, then the service quality would be considered to be low. On the contrary, when a customer is booked in within five minutes of checking in and the customers leaves a feedback showing that he/she was satisfied with the services offered, the quality of the service offered is considered to be high. In view of the importance of service quality, I believe that it is very important since it is what determines whether the hotel has more guests in the future or not. The reason for that is due to fact that most of these guests give feedback to their colleagues about the quality of the services offered and it is obvious that if the quality of the service was low, the hotel would struggle to appeal to customers looking for high quality services that are supposed to be offered by a five star hotel. You will be surprised to hear that the management has gone to the extent of informing us that at times, we might have to do extra work just to ensure that the quality of service offered is high. For example, if the receptionist who was supposed to work on the evening shift is late or fails to turn up at the time my shift is coming to an end, I have to be ready to work a few hours until another receptionist comes. Anyone working for the hotel irrespective of the department that he/she is working is responsible for making sure that customers make no complaints for the service that they receive.</p>
Receptionist2	<p><b>Receptionist:</b> In our hotel service quality is about the customers been happy. We specifically have to ensure that the customers are happy with what they get</p>



	<p>from the hotel. So, for receptionist, some of the things that determine the service quality entails; been welcoming to the guests, assisting the guests with any questions that they might have, ensuring that the rooms that they have checked in to are clean, and arranging for room cleaning if they happen to request their rooms to be cleaned.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Any why do you think service quality is important?</u></p> <p><b>Receptionist :</b> Service quality is important as it ensures that the guests are happy. Having happy guests is a good thing since these guest will be loyal customers of the hotel. They could also recommend the hotel to their relatives or friends. But in case the guests are not happy with the services and products that are provided by the company, the guests will not come again to the hotel and will also speak negatively about the hotel. So, in order for the hotel to be successful and to be able to compete with the competitors that it competes with, service quality has to be taken care of.</p>
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Question 5	<u>To what extent your hotel follows specific standards when applying high service quality? And why / How</u>
Waiter 5	<p><b>Waiter:</b> I myself follow the standards and want my co worker to follow them as well. If you are not disciplined enough to follow the management orders, then you are not at all fit to work in any organization and this being a five star hotel, unprofessional behaviour is not a choice. If you are in a service industry then you have to give your best in terms of job profile. The standards are</p>

	<p>meant for our betterment and if we follow them it is we who will be on the safer side. Also there are others to notice you every time and unprofessional conduct can lead to immediate dismissal. For us the standards are little bit more as compared to other departments because when it comes to food the most important part is hygiene. The food may be very tasty but if it is or it seems to be unhygienic, the customers won't even try to taste it for once. Like if we are wearing dirty clothes and serving the food to the customers, they might not eat it or if they eat they will complain about our looks to the management which will be embracing as well. At this stage at least you are expected to be well groomed neat and clean there should be no one telling you to groom yourself. Following proper standards bring uniformity in work and workplace also it helps us to be more self confident about our work.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> How is self confident and standards related?</p> <p><b>Waiter:</b> See self confident is related like if some guests unnecessarily try to be over smart with you and tell us to mend our ways or anything unusual then obviously we can say that we are following our standards and these are the management orders we have to adhere to them at any cost.</p> <p>And in case you yourself don't follow the standards then if the customers complain about something then we are not enough confident to tell them what is wrong and what is right so they take advantage of this and try to get their unnecessary work done from us. I Think now my point is clear, is it?</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Yes now I understand what you mean to say.</p>
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Waiter 6	<p><b>Waiter:</b> I have been hired little time ago and I am still learning each and everything. The management is giving me proper training about the quality standards and until I am clear with them I can't serve the customers. But I have worked in other hotels before and I know that each and every workplace has standards of their own. Earlier I was a waiter in three star hotel so the standards were a little less than this but this being a five star hotel there are many standards in combination to each other like if your over coat is dirty then it is obvious that your inner like shirt pant won't be that clean so this is how they are associated with each other. Also in this hotel the brand image is there the supervisor won't allow any staff to be ill groomed or unhygienic they won't allow you to work on your shift and also I have learned that for a waiter what is the important of hotel hat.</p>
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<b>Question8</b>	<p><b><u>How would you describe the recruitment and selection process in this hotel and how would you describe the relationship between the job description and the service quality?</u></b></p>
Receptionist 1	<p><b>Receptionist :</b> The recruitment and selection process used by the HR department is good since whenever there is a vacancy, the hotel first aims to recruit from the workforce already working for the hotel and only hire from the</p>

	<p>outside when it is established no employee within the workforce is interested with the vacancy. In addition, as far as low level employees are concerned, the HR encourages employees to inform friends or relatives who they think will be well suited to fill the existing vacancy. For management posts, the hotel hires from both internal and external and applicants can attend two to three interviews before a job offer is made. The recruitment process is normally effective since individuals hired end up filling the vacancy well. One of the reasons why the process is effective can be explained to be due to the fact that the job descriptions are normally detailed specifying the skills required, roles and responsibilities, and what is expected from the individual who is eventually hired.</p>
Cook2	<p><b>Respondent:</b> The recruitment process at the hotel is perfect. For us working in the kitchen, whenever there is a vacancy, the hotel hires both from the existing workforce or from the outside. Actually, the hotel always advises employees to apply for vacancies that emerge and most of the times only look to hire from the outside if existing employees cannot fill the vacancy. The recruitment process is also very intensive and actually involves a number of stages since the hotel wants to make sure that anyone who is eventually hired to fill an existing position has the required skills and experiences to fill that position and offer services that are of very high quality. Remember that we are a five star hotel and that we have to offer the best quality whatever the case.</p>

## Supervisors

<b>Question 1</b>	<u>Please explain briefly about your background and experience in this industry.</u>
Front Office Supervisor1	<b>Front Office Supervisor:</b> For the last five years, I have been working in the hotel industry. I worked for two years as a receptionist for another five star hotel. I then applied for a front office supervisor post in the current hotel where I work in. I passed the interview and have since then been working as a front office supervisor. As a front office supervisor, I am responsible for leading the front desk operation ensuring and maintaining a constantly high standard of customer service.
Front Office Supervisor2	<b>Front office supervisor:</b> Well I am from hospitality industry. I have always worked in hotels and this is my fourth hotel. I have started my career from receptionist like 10 years back and after that I never looked back and kept on giving my best performance. I joined this hotel as a front office supervisor past 2.5 years back. Earlier I have worked as a receptionist in 4 star hotel and when I got an opportunity to work over here I joined them. I think all this has been my years of hard work and dedication towards my job. My job responsibility are like managing the shifts of the junior staff, marking their working hours and days, training and supporting them from time to time and ensuring best service quality is given to the guests.
Housekeeping Supervisor1	<b>Housekeeping Supervisor:</b> I have worked in the hotel for close to fifteen years now. I joined as a cleaner and have been able to work my way up over the years due to my good performance as well as close relationships with the managers. As a housekeeping supervisor, my roles include, supervising work activities of those who are in charge of cleaning the rooms in order to ensure that the rooms are clean, organized, and attractive to our guest. I also get to assign roles and responsibilities to the room cleaners and in case there are any complaints about the cleanliness of the rooms, I am in charge of ensuring that the complaints are looked after and any issues raised are solved. I also get to screen the applicants who are looking to join the hotel

	as housekeepers, and train the applicants if they are hired and unfortunately
Housekeeping Supervisor2	<p><b>Housekeeping Supervisor:</b> I have been working here past 7 years now. I joined here as a housekeeper and was responsible for room maintenance. I have given all my efforts to reach this position. I have always worked according to the standards and guidelines provided to me by the management or my manager. I think that is why I am here at this position.</p> <p>My job and responsibilities include regular checkups of the room and surroundings I am incharge of 10 floors so I have to check every floor, ensuring that the junior staff adheres to the standards, I have to manage the grievances and complaints of the customers and ensure the best possible solution to them also I have to allocate staff according to their strengths and weaknesses so basically judging the juniors is also important.</p>
Head Waiters1	<p><b>Head Waiter:</b> I have worked in the hotel industry for almost thirteen years now. However, I have only been working at the current hotel for the last four years. Before that, I worked for another five star hotel for 7 years as a waiter. I joined this hotel as a waiter and got promoted last year after the head waiter left to work for a six star hotel based in the Middle East. As a head waiter, I am responsible for; supervising, coordinating, and even training the waiters working at the hotel. I also allocate the shifts to the waiters according to the anticipated number of guests.</p>
Head Cook1	<p><b>Head Cook:</b> You will be surprised to hear that I started working in hotels almost thirty years ago and have earned promotions to the point that I am now the head cook. Throughout my working life, I have only worked for this specific hotel. I started as a kitchen porter when I completed my high school. I then got promoted to kitchen assistant. I worked as a kitchen assistant and then enrolled for culinary classes and upon completion of the studies, I was employed again by the hotel as a cook. I worked as a cook for 8 years in the hotel and then got hired as a head chef five years ago. It has been quite a journey for me but am very proud of my achievements.</p>

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<b>Question 2</b>	<u>Why did you choose to work in this hotel? Explain as much as possible here?</u>
Front Office Supervisor1	<b>Front Office Supervisor:</b> There are various reasons why I opted to work in this hotel. To begin with, the hotel offered me the chance to grow professionally since I was hired as a front office supervisor which to me was a development in my career as I am now in charge of a team while in the past, I was never a supervisor. The other reason is that the benefits that were on offer here were much better while compared to what my previous employer offered. Actually, I had even decided that even if I was not hired as a supervisor, I was going to request them to hire me as a receptionist.
Front Office Supervisor2	<b>Front office supervisor:</b> I always wanted to work in a five star hotel and on some higher post. Earlier I was working in a three star hotel as a receptionist for almost 4 years and when I saw that there is an opening in five star hotel that to for the post of supervisor, I immediately applied for the job and after sometime I was called for an interview and by God's grace I was selected here as a front office supervisor with double salary that I was being paid earlier. And also the the reputation of this hotel in the market is very good people are even ready to pay the agency in order to get hired in this hotel. If you are working here, there is so many benefits and most importantly there is job security.
Housekeeping Supervisor1	<b>Housekeeping supervisor:</b> Throughout my working life, I have only worked for this hotel. I come from a very poor background and started working for the hotel at a time when I almost gave up in life as I had nothing. I at the time was looking for any kind of job available and was fortunate to secure a job at the hotel. Now that I have worked here for 15 years, I can tell you for a fact that the hotel offers very good pay and other benefits and that is why I have been here for a long period of

	time and will continue been here for the foreseeable future.
Housekeeping Supervisor2	<b>Housekeeping supervisor:</b> I joined here as a housekeeper with low salary and benefits but I always knew that there are promotions each year and if I can work hard or follow the standards, I can be easily promoted to supervisor position. Also I have worked here almost 5 years as a housekeeper but my hard work and dedication towards my job caught the eye of the management and finally they decided to promote me as a supervisor. The management told me that I have followed the standards and throughout these years have given quality service to the customers and also they almost doubled my salary and benefits and also after like two three years they will promote me to managerial level if I work the way I have been working throughout these years.
Head Waiters1	<b>Head Waiter:</b> The terms of employment here and the salary and other benefits that were offered here were much better while compared to my previous employer. So, when I learnt about the vacancy, I submitted my application and was fortunate to get hired. I cannot regret leaving my previous employers since as the working environment here is far much better than the working environment of the previous hotel. Moreover, the pay is far much better. Actually, there is a difference of almost \$4500 a year when the salary that I was paid by my former employer is compared to the salary that I get paid nowadays.
Head Cook1	<b>Head Cook:</b> At the time when I joined the hotel as a kitchen porter, I was in dire need of work. I had just finished my high school and had moved out of my parents. Initially, I never thought that I would work in a hotel. However, I found the hotel to offer good benefits and it was from this experience that I decided that I am going to work as a cook in the hotel. I have been satisfied when working for the hotel and there has never been a time when I ever thought of leaving my job



<b>Question 12</b>	<u>How would you describe the promotion system in your hotel and how easy to get promoted here? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?</u>
Front Office Supervisor1	<p><b>Front Office Manager:</b> The hotel wants us to believe that promotion is there and is done by the basis of performance and even the period that one has been working for the hotel. However, in reality, that is never the case. The competition is always very high and employees feel as if promotion is awarded to employees who are close to the managers.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Does it have any impact to the service quality?</u></p> <p><b>Front Office Manager :</b> Yeah.....to a certain extent, the promotion affects service quality negatively since when one feel that his promotion opportunity has been awarded to someone, that individual is less likely to give the best for the hotel.</p>
Front Office Supervisor2	<p><b>FRONT OFFICE SUPERVISOR :</b> The promotion system of any hotel is very important as it makes a better relation between the staff and the management. However promotion not only depends on the efforts of the worker as every member works to the best of its capabilities but rather it is more dependent on the age factor and experience. The ones who have worked for more years and have a lot more experience than the younger staff are promoted. The younger staff has less opportunities of getting promoted and the word struggling fits best for them cause they believe that the struggle would polish them whereas easy promotions would make them lazy.</p> <p>This struggling factor would enable them to work more.</p> <p><b>INTERVIEWER:</b> do u think this type of promotion has to effect the quality of services?</p> <p><b>FRONT OFFICE SUPERVISOR :</b> Yes but both in negative and positive way. A sense of being promoted make a worker more dedicated towards his job and he tries to work more in order to obtain good results. If the promotion is dependent on experience and age factor the younger staff would give up the idea of working hard because they would know that the will not get promoted till they attain a certain age</p>

	<p>or gain experience, thus this would make them lazy and they would not try to come up with new ideas and innovations whereas the older generation is too old to think of new ideas with the changing times and scenario thus there would be slow growth in improving the quality of facilities and things would work just the way they used to work without having new innovations.</p>
Housekeeping Supervisor1	<p><b>Housekeeping Supervisor:</b> The promotion is very fair since your performance, experience and the skills that you have determine whether you are going to be promoted or not. I am an example of how these factors are taken into consideration when offering promotion since these are the factors that resulted to be been promoted to the position of housekeeping supervisor.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And what is the relationship between that and service quality?</u></p> <p><b>Housekeeping Supervisor:</b> The relationship is that by offering these promotion chances to employees, it helps motivates them so increasing service quality. Actually, employees tend to ensure that they do their best and that the customers and the managers notice that since once that has been noted by the managers, the employees are going to be considered for promotion when a promotion chance emerges.</p>
Head Waiters1	<p><b>Head Waiter:</b> If you can recall, I said that I joined this hotel as a waiter and have been able to work my way up to become a head waiter. The reason why I am saying this is because the promotion system in the hotel in my view is very fair since I could not have been promoted if it was not fair. Your achievements for the hotel play a major role in determining whether you will be promoted or not. For example, for waiters, those who are always on time, have good customer satisfaction rate and always do their best for the hotel are the ones that are considered whenever a promotion opportunity emerges.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And how would you explain the connection between promotion and</u></p>

	<p><u>service quality</u></p> <p><b>Head Waiter:</b> The fact that the company offers the employees promotion opportunities implies that the employees are always doing their best in ensuring that they offer the best service quality that they can since by doing that, they know that they will be increasing their chances of been promoted. So, in a way, promotion enhances service quality since over the years, I have found that if employees feel that they have some chances of been promoted in the future, they are likely to do their best since they want to impress the managers as well as the customers and ensure that they end up been promoted.</p>
Head Cook1	<p><b>Head Cook:</b> I have worked hard since I started working for the hotel. My hard work has been notices and I have been able to rise from a kitchen porter to the position of the head cook. If there is anyone who wants to see the proof of the promotion system at the hotel, I am an ideal example. The hotel is very very fair when it comes to promotion. Do your best and your results will make you a promotion candidate, it is that simple.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>What about the relationship between the promotion and service quality?</u></p> <p><b>Head Cook:</b> Since employees know that they will eventually get promoted if their performances are ideal, the employees are always striving to offer best quality services to the customers.</p>

## HR MANAGERS

Question3	<p><u>What <b>service quality means</b> to you in your hotel? Why and how it is important?</u></p>
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<p><b>HR1</b></p>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Let me start by defining what I understand service quality to be.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Go ahead please</p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> Any customer served at our hotel has a certain expectation of the kind of service that he/she is going to get from our hotel. In that view, service quality quantifies the extent to which a service is delivered, contrasted to the expectations of the customer. Therefore, even though people tend to think that it is the hotel that determines the service quality, we are of the view that the service quality is determined by our guests since if we can meet and even surpass their expectations, they will be of the view that the service quality offered is very high. However, in situations where we cannot be able to meet the expectations of our guests they will leave a feedback indicating they were disappointed for the low level service they received. Service quality is therefore important for us as a hotel since it has a great impact on our operations. For example, if guests complain about our services and we do nothing, demand for our rooms and services will drastically decrease eventually. I hope you now get to understand that as a five star restaurant, high quality service is one of our key success factors.</p> <p>To achieve high quality service, all our employees are thoroughly trained on how they are supposed to offer services to the guests. We also collect feedback from customers willing to give feedback about their experience on our facilities and analyses the feedback and acts upon it in order to ensure that we get to satisfy our customers. Finally, all the heads of the different departments are tasked to ensure that their respective departments offer the best level of service quality possible.</p>
<p><b>HR2</b></p>	<p><b>HR manager:</b> OK.....Serve quality means surpassing the expectations of the customers. You see, when a customer comes to our hotel, the customer has some expectations about the quality of the services and products to offered. So, if we can be able to meet these expectations and actually surpass them, the customers will definitely feel that they have been offered quality services. They will so have a positive experience with our hotel and they are likely to use our services in the</p>

	<p>future or even recommend our services to their friends, colleagues, or even family members in the future.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And how do you ensure service quality</u></p> <p><b>HR manager :</b> We normally request our guests to give us feedback on our services and products. From the feedback given, we can then be able to gauge whether the quality of our services and products is good enough to meet the expectations of the customers. For those who dine at our restaurant and don't get to spend their night with us, we can get their feedback from interactions on social media or even by having the supervisor asking them simply whether they enjoyed the meal at the hotel or not. Once feedback has come in, we analyze it and if need be, we act upon the feedback. Remember we are a five star hotel and we have to offer services that are of high quality to our customers.</p>
<b>HR3</b>	<p><b>HR manager :</b> In our hotel, service quality means satisfying the customers. We are a five star hotel and our customers expect to receive the best accommodation and hospitality services that there can be in most parts of the world. So, when we are able to meet the expectations of our customers and fully satisfy them, it is at that point that we can say that we offer our customers a five star service quality. It is not an easy thing to achieve though through hard work, we have managed to consistently achieve that over the years.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>What is the importance of service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> The quality of the services that we offer to our services goes a long way in determining the success of the hotel. When quality is high, our customers are fully satisfied. They will either book our rooms in the future or recommend the hotel to other clients. However, when the customers are not satisfied, that is not possible and that is obviously going to have a negative impact to the overall operations of the hotel. So, we always strive to do our best in ensuring that our customers receive five star quality services.</p>

<b>HR4</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> For the hotel that I work for, service quality comprises of a purposeful assessment that reflects the customer's observation of specific aspects of the service offered. These aspects comprises of consistency, receptiveness, reassurance, understanding, and tangibles. On the other hand, satisfaction of the customers tend to be more inclusive and is mainly determined by perceptions of service quality, product quality, and price that the customers have to pay among others. For instance, when customers pay premium prices for the services offered by our hotel, they expect the best quality and nothing else from us. The service quality is in that context quite important for us since it determines whether our customers get what they expected from us or not and if they are satisfied, they could end up becoming loyal customers or become ambassadors of the hotel as they will refer their friends and colleagues to the hotel. Therefore, for us, the service quality will determine the success or failure of the hotel.</p>
<b>HR5</b>	<p><b>HR manager:</b> Service quality can only be quantified from the feedback that we get from our customers. For instance, if our customers tell us that they are happy with the services that they receive from us, to us that is an indication that our service quality is high. On the other hand, if the feedback that we get from our customers is negative, then that shows that the service quality is low. So, there are various aspects that comes into play when it comes to the issue of service quality. To begin with, the hotel needs to be clean, and the ambience needs to send out the message that we are offering high quality services. All our staff needs to be clean and professional when they are interacting with our customers. There is a lot to service quality that I could not even exhaust if I started talking about it.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> And why is service quality important to your hotel?</p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> It is very important since as I already explained, it is a critical factor in determining whether the customers are satisfied with the services that we offer or not. The customers are only going to be satisfied with a high quality service and that will eventually have positive impacts to the hotel. They will obviously use the services that we offer in the future and might even recommend the hotel to other clients. Nevertheless, if the service quality offered was low, that</p>

	would never happen. I guess you can now see the reason why we put a lot of emphasis on service quality.
<b>HR6</b>	<b>HR Manager:</b> Service quality is the degree to which the customers perception of the services that the hotel offers are met. For example, as a five star hotel, our customers hope to receive the best quality of services possible. So if the services that we offer them surpasses their expectations, the customers are going to say that the service quality is high. Nevertheless, if the services offered do not meet their expectations, the customers are going to say that the service quality is poor. So, as a five star hotel, we need to ensure that we offer our customers services of high quality. We need to ensure that the hotel keeps attracting as many customers as possible and the only way that is going to be possible is by ensuring that we constantly offer services that are of very high quality.

<b>Question 4</b>	<u>In your opinion, what factors should be taken into account when applying high level of service quality?</u>
<b>HR1</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Since I work in the hotel industry, I am going to discussed the factors that I believe needs to be taken into account when applying high level of service quality in the hotel industry and in particular my hotel.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Go ahead please</p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> Tangibles is one of the factors to take into consideration. It entails the physical features of the services and products that are being offered at the hotel. Some of the aspects that are considered in my hotel and are part of the tangibles comprises of; appearance of the rooms, food, and even the staff working in the hotel. The other aspect that we take into consideration when applying high quality service entails the aspect of reliability and responsiveness of the services. As you are aware, as a five star hotel, our customers have got very very high expectations from us. So, we need to ensure that we are capable of delivering what we promise to our customers and that they can rely on us. For example, we promise to offer baby cot for customers with small babies. That</p>

	<p>promise implies that in case a guest checks in and requests for a baby cot, we have to provide it since if we fail to do so, the guest will have the impression that the services being offered are below par and not of good quality. As a hotel we do whatever it takes to ensure that we offer our customers services and products that are of exceptional quality. Also, we must be able <b>to minimise the complains by predicting what can make the customer upset</b>. For instance, if the customer hates to wait too long, we try to speed up the check-in process.</p>
<b>HR2</b>	<p><b>HR manager :</b> During the time that I have worked in the hospitality sector, I have found that there are five main aspects that determine the quality of the services offered.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And what are these five aspects?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> The first one entails the tangibles. These comprises of the outlook of the physical facilities, the furniture, the equipment, personnel, and even how we communicate with our customers. The second one entails reliability, since if the hotel cannot be able to deliver what it has promised the guests, then the guests will not be satisfied with the services offered. The other aspect entails responsiveness since it is paramount that all our employees are willing and are ready to promptly attend to the needs and demands of the customers. The fourth aspect entails assurance where the knowledge as well as the courtesy of the employees is expected to create trust and confidence with the customers. Finally, empathy needs to be shown to each and every customer that we serve since it shows the customers that we care for them and that we are ready to do anything to ensure that they have wonderful and better experience with us.</p>
<b>HR3</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> I can answer this question in different perspectives. However, let me answer it using the most basic angle that you will obviously find easy to understand.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Go ahead please</p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> For any given organization, the quality of the service is only determined by comparing the expectations of the customers with the services that</p>



	<p>they receive. So, when the customers expectation are met with the services that they receive, the service quality can be said to be high while on the other hand, if the services offered fails to meet the expectations of the customers, then the quality of the services offered can be said to be low. For example, our customers expect that the meals served to them are freshly prepared, the rooms to be clean, and the utensils used to serve them to be clean. In addition, they also expect that the employees whom the interact with are highly trained and know how to interact with them in a courteous manner. So, there is a lot that comes into play when it comes to service quality and all aspects needs to be considered since if only one aspect is considered then the other aspects of the service offering could comprise of low quality and that is definitely going to have negative impacts into the customers perceptions of the hotel.</p>
<b>HR4</b>	<p><b>HR manager :</b> As I already explained to you, the main aspects that determine the service quality comprises of consistency, receptiveness, reassurance, understanding, and tangibles. So, when applying high level of service quality, it is important that these factors are taken into account. For example, in case of consistency, if the hotel cannot be able to serve all customers who come to the restaurant in a timely manner, then there is a high chance that some customers will be of the view that the services offered at the hotel are not of high service quality. Likewise, our employees need to show empathy, be receptive, and reassure our customers while the tangibles also symbolize the high level of service quality that we offer. Indeed, the furniture in the hotel, appearance of our employees, and even the ambience needs to resemble that of five star and of supreme quality.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Why is that important?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager :</b> Because it is paramount that service offer is of very very high quality. We are a five star hotel and five star means no compromise when it comes to the level of service quality.</p>
<b>HR5</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The first factor to take into consideration when applying high level of service quality entails steadiness. What that means is that customers</p>

	<p>must be able to get a certain level of service quality at all times that they are at the hotel. So, whether we have many guest or not, the level of quality should never decline. The other factor entails approachability which means that our customers must be able to access our services at any time without any challenges. For example, a customer who wants to use the room service should know that once he/she places an order through the room service, the order will be delivered within a short period of time. The other factor is that of guarantee which means that customers should be assured that whatever they happen to order, they will receive it. You can imagine a customer booking for a double sized bed and then receive a single sized bed. The customer is not going to be happy at all. The other factor is that of understanding where it is crucial for our staff to understand our customers and their needs and ensure that they do their best in ensuring that the needs of the customers are even exceed. Finally, the other aspect is that of tangibles which comprises of stuff such as the furniture and the interiors of the hotel. These are very important since it is vital that they are all of supreme quality. For example, the furniture needs to be modern and in great condition.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>Why are these factors important?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> These factors are what determine the level of service quality. If they are well taken care of, they will assure us that we are offering our customers high quality service. However, if they are compromised, the quality will also be compromised and that will have negative impact to the service quality.</p>
<b>HR6</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> For any given organization, quality is only quantified at the end of the service delivery. So, after the hotel has offered the customers the various services that it offers it cannot be able to change the service quality. At our hotel, when thinking about quality, we mainly use the SERVQUAL approach that comprises of five main dimensions. This dimensions comprises of; reliability which entails our ability to provide the promised service dependably and accurately, assurance which involves having the knowledge and courteousness of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence to our customers,</p>

	<p>tangibles which involves the outlook and appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and even the marketing materials, empathy which involves our employees been caring, offering individualized attention to customer and responsiveness which entails the ensoiasm to assist our customers and ensure that they are offered prompt services. The five dimensions are what our customers mainly consider when they are making the decision whether we have offered then high service quality or not and for that reason, we consider all the five dimensions at all times in order to ensure we offer high level of service quality.</p>
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<b>Question 8</b>	<p><u>How would you describe the recruitment and selection process in this hotel and how would you describe the relationship between the job description and the service quality?</u></p>
<b>HR1</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> Generally, we hire from both internal and external even though when hiring for management positions, we mainly hire from external due to the fact that we have found it to be more beneficial as the individual hired from the outside will come with new ideas and concepts that we might not be able to have if we hired from the inside. Nevertheless, we always try to ensure that we get a good balance between hiring from internal and hiring from the outside.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How about the process</b></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> The process is quite elaborate. Actually, any applicant irrespective of the position has to be interviewed at least three times before a decision on the applicant who is going to be hired is made. You might think three interviews are a lot but we have realized that by having three interviews, we increase the chances of hiring the individual who is well qualified for the task.</p> <p><b>Interviewer: How about relationship between recruitment and selection and the service quality</b></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> The recruitment and selection is the first step in the HR process.</p>

	<p>If we attract people to apply for the opening positions, we will have better chance to select the best of them who have the skill to provide good service quality. This will reduce the training cost at later stage.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Do you mean that if you select the right candidate, you don't have to train them?</p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> Of course not. Training is something we can't neglect. But, having poor performers will consume more time to train them and this increase the cost, while the good and expert candidates will need shorter training and this reduce the cost.</p>
<b>HR2</b>	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The recruitment and selection process at the hotel is quite exhaustive since we always want to ensure that we hire the individual who is most qualified to fill an existing position. At times, we recruit from the hotel and other times, we get to recruit from the outside. Some of the recruitment and hiring stages that we have to go through comprises of; job description and vacancy evaluation, person specification, summarizing the advertisement/ notification, determining the questions to be asked during the interview, inviting job applications, shortlisting applicants for the interviews, undertaking the interviews, selecting the ideal applicant, making the decision on the applicant to hire and finally hiring the ideal applicant.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And what is the relationship between job recruitment and service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> When the recruitment is thorough and the employees hired are those that are hired are quote qualified to fill the vacant position, there is a high chance that the employees are likely to offer services that are of higher quality to our guests. So, we always do our best in order to ensure that we hire the employees who are most qualified to fill the vacant positions since that increases the chances of these employees been able to offer high quality service to our customers.</p>

Question12	<p>How would you describe the promotion system that provided by the management to the employees? How would you describe the relationship between this and the service quality?</p>
HR1	<p><b>HR manager:</b> At our hotel, we believe in growth of employees that can only be proved by the promotion offered. Every year, we conduct performance review that can also be referred to as appraisal of every employee. During the reviews, the employees are given the opportunity to explain their career growth and the HR staff conducting the appraisal can then inform the employee what the employee needs to do or areas that needs improvement so that the employee can be promoted. So, when there is a chance for promotion, the employees are promoted according to their performances and qualifications.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>So how would you describe the relationship between the promotion system and service quality</u></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> Well, all employees know that their performance plays a major role in determining their promotion. Therefore, employees always strive to ensure that they offer the best service since by doing that they will be enhancing their promotion chances.</p>
HR2	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> At the hotel we advocate for the growth and professional development of all our employees through promotions as well as trainings of the employees. We are an equal opportunity employer and whenever there is a promotion opportunity, we ensure that we are fair and that the employee who ends up been promoted is actually the employee who is most qualified for the job.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>And how does that affect service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR manager:</b> All our employees know that their performance determine their promotion and for that reason, I can say that promotion helps enhance the service quality since employees are aware of the fact that if they want to get promoted, they have to offer high quality services to our customers since even then</p>

	<p>feedback given by the customers is taken into consideration when deciding on the employee who will end up being hired.</p>
HR3	<p><b>HR Manager:</b> The promotion system that is offered to the employees of the hotel to the employees is very fair since the hotel always ensures that all employees irrespective of their backgrounds are given a fair chance. So, whenever there is a promotion opportunity, various factors are taken into consideration in order to determine the employee who deserves to be promoted. Among others, some of the factors that come into play when deciding on the employee who is to be promoted comprises of: duration of employment with the hotel, achievements during the time the employee has been working with us, and performance record.</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> <u>What is the relationship between promotion and service quality?</u></p> <p><b>HR Manager:</b> The employees are aware of the fact if they perform their duties well over a period of time, they will eventually be promoted. So, they are always doing their best to offer the best service quality that they can in order to enhance their chances of being promoted.</p>