



Talent management and retention strategies in luxury hotels: Evidence from four countries

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide a definition of talent and talent management in the luxury hotel sector with a focus on talent retention strategies.

Design/Methodology/Approach

A qualitative approach was employed and 27 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers in luxury hotels in four countries (US, UK, Australia, and Greece).

Findings

Talent refers to those who “go above and beyond”. Talent retention strategies in luxury hotels include a friendly, family-oriented and open access culture, teamwork, compensation, succession planning, and training and development. A hybrid exclusive and inclusive approach to TM is proposed with the implicit engagement of the individuals.

Practical implications

Luxury hotels should choose talent management practices that fit the organizational culture with a focus on retention strategies that are tailor-made to the individual or groups of individuals. Opportunities to progress, succession planning and employee participation to talent management are valued in the industry.

Originality / value

This study provides findings from empirical comparative research conducted in four different countries, whereas most published work on talent management focuses on bibliographic reviews. It provides a conceptualization of talent and talent management. This study frames the nature of TM in hotels, and advances the knowledge of talent retention strategies found to be effective in hospitality.

Keywords: talent, talent management, retention strategies, luxury hotels

Paper type: Research paper

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1. Introduction

The hospitality environment is complex and diverse, facing many challenges (structural and perceptual) relating to “low productivity, high levels of labour turnover, poor remuneration, demanding working conditions and limited opportunities of personal development” (Chung and D’Annunzio-Green, 2018; Baum, 2008, p. 725). The labor profile of the hospitality industry has changed over the years due to social, economic and political factors such as immigration, labour mobility, and Brexit among others. The hospitality and tourism industry has been considered as based on technical skills, where most of the work has been characterised as low value, demanding few conceptual or knowledge-driven attributes (Baum, 2008). Solnet *et al.* (2016) propose that hospitality customers seek to gain more power and control of their experience in view to the growing demand for the ‘experience economy’ which has an impact on customer-facing staff as they are now required to enable co-creation experiences. This adds to the technical skills required especially in knowledge based positions.

Clark *et al.* (2017) and Deery (2009) add low pay, seasonality, poor work-life balance as factors intensifying the challenges in the industry. One of the main challenges in the industry is high employee turnover, which is common due to working unsociable hours, high levels of casualization (Deery, 2009), and routinized jobs (Iverson and Currvan, 2003). The industry is also characterised by the use of migrant labour to address temporary needs making the challenges eminent and calling for solutions to human resource challenges. Competition for labour has grown and employers are looking to attract talent. The diversity of the workforce in terms of age, race and culture has put pressure on employers to implement diversity management in managing talent (D’Annunzio, 2008). Baum (2008) proposes that talent in the context of hospitality and tourism does not necessarily have the same meaning as in other

1 sectors. Defining talent in this context is a challenging process, which should focus on
2 inclusiveness and an open-minded approach to training and development (Baum, 2008). He
3
4 also suggests that hospitality managers should adopt creative strategies to talent retention. This
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6 paper builds upon this argument with empirical evidence on providing a definition of talent
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8 and talent management in hospitality and more specifically in the luxury hotel sector.
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15 Although talent and talent management (TM) have received increasing attention over the past
16 decade (Scullion *et al.*, 2016; Thunnissen, 2016), their lack of intellectual and theoretical
17 foundations has been highlighted by many studies (Scullion *et al.*, 2016). Gallardo-Gallardo
18 and Thunissen (2016) propose that empirical research on TM is linked to the field of HRM.
19 The field is considered to be young (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunissen, 2016) and there is a
20 need for a consensus on a definition of talent and TM. Studies suggest that, although some
21 policies have been presented, they differ from real practices in organizations (Vaiman *et al.*,
22 2012). Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunissen (2016) claim that very few empirical studies discuss
23 how organizations conceptualize talent and TM. Even fewer studies focus on talent retention
24 strategies (Tlaiss *et al.*, 2017), which is the key objective for TM. Chung and D'Annunzio-
25 Green (2018), Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013), Collings and Mellahi (2009), and Nijs *et al.*
26 (2013) suggest that more studies should be conducted on how talent is conceptualized,
27 managed and retained. Deery and Jago (2015) state that there are very few studies of TM in
28 hospitality. They report studies in hospitality by Solnet *et al.* (2013), Davidson and Wang
29 (2011) and Lub *et al.* (2012). These authors agree that TM differs from mainstream
30 management literature. The existing literature provides evidence mainly from the US context
31 creating the need to explore different contexts and perspectives (Collings *et al.*, 2011).
32
33 Thunissen *et al.* (2013) report that TM literature focuses on global multinational enterprises
34 from the American context with less emphasis placed on organization in Europe and
35 particularly the UK. The Boston Consulting Group (2007) reports that TM is one of the key
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1 five challenges facing HR managers in Europe. Nevertheless, there is lack of empirical
2 evidence of research on TM in this context. Thunissen *et al.* (2013) question whether
3 approaches to TM investigated and proposed in different cultural contexts can be applied in an
4 Anglo-Saxon context. Chung and D'Annunzio-Green (2018) conducted a study in the UK
5 however they used small-and-medium enterprises, as they claim the outset of human capital in
6 these organizations differs from multinational organizations. It is evident that great value is
7 placed on TM, but little is known about how it works in practice (Thunissen, 2016) especially
8 in comparing different countries and TM practices. The aim of this paper is to explore how
9 talent is defined in luxury hospitality organizations; how they practice TM; and how talent is
10 actually retained with focus on retention strategies for reducing employee turnover. This paper
11 begins by providing an overview of employee turnover and the challenges in hospitality
12 management, followed by a review of the literature on talent and TM in hospitality especially
13 with focus on talent retention. It provides empirical evidence from four different countries in
14 the context of luxury hotels.

2. Literature review

2.1 Employee turnover in hospitality

15 A KPMG (2016) study stated that attracting and retaining talented employees is the biggest
16 challenge for companies for the foreseeable future, including hospitality. Human capital has
17 been identified as not only a way to cope with environmental uncertainty, but also as a source
18 of competitive advantage (Meyers *et al.*, 2013; Meyers and van Woerkom, 2014; Gallardo-
19 Gallardo *et al.*, 2013; Ratna and Chawla, 2012). The hospitality industry is characterised by
20 high employee turnover, often losing talent that can contribute to its competitive advantage
21 (Baum 2008; Dawson *et al.*, 2011; Babakus *et al.*, 2008; Christensen-Hughes and Rog, 2008).
22 Indeed, 'high employee turnover' is considered as a reality of the industry and part of the
23 hospitality's organisational culture (Dawson *et al.*, 2011). Various reasons are identified in the

1 literature contributing to high turnover rates in hospitality. For instance, employee turnover
2 causes may relate to limited opportunities for career development, low specialisation of skills
3 (Chalkiti and Sigala, 2010; Brown *et al.*, 2015), poor pay, seasonality, unsociable and long
4 working hours and poor work-life balance (Chalkiti and Sigala, 2010; Lee and Ok, 2012). Other
5 reasons relating to high turnover are demographic variables such as age, job tenure, education
6 and gender (Govaerts *et al.*, 2011; Festing and Schäfer, 2014; Vaiman *et al.*, 2012). High
7 turnover may result in many disadvantages for the hospitality business. For example, turnover
8 is associated with increased costs for the business, loss of expertise from experienced
9 employees, negative impact on workplace efficiency and service quality (Chalkiti and Sigala,
10 2010; Davidson *et al.*, 2010; Yang *et al.*, 2012). An average hotel can spend A\$ 109,909 to
11 replace managerial and supervisory employees each year and A\$ 9,591 operational staff
12 (Davidson *et al.*, 2010). Ongori (2007) provided a theoretical underpinning for factors that
13 influence employee turnover and split them on two main categories: job related factors and
14 organizational factors.

15 On the other hand, turnover has also been associated with positive outcomes, such as
16 contributing to idea generation through knowledge circulation (Chalkiti and Sigala, 2010).
17 However, organizations must be cautioned on the importance of policies in retaining
18 knowledge from employees leaving the organisation in order to avoid knowledge transferring
19 to competitors. Despite this positive benefit employee turnover is considered as a major
20 challenge for hospitality businesses, particularly due to high business costs (Brown *et al.*, 2015;
21 Robinson *et al.*, 2014; Yang *et al.*, 2012). High turnover is even more critical when it affects
22 talented employees that can contribute to the current and future success of the organisation.

2.2 *Luxury hotels*

23 Schuler *et al.* (2011) propose that small organizations may not have TM due to their limitation
24 on resources. Bolander *et al.* (2017) add that TM is a complex topic which is better investigated

1 in larger organizations where resources for adopting such practices are more possible to exist.
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4 The luxury hotels industry has become a significant contributor to the broad hospitality
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6 industry, with forecasts of even greater expansion. Luxury hotels (4&5-star-hotels) are hard to
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8 define since the term luxury itself is vague (Sharma, 2016). They provide top-line service and
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10 facilities with difficulties in operating them and high degree of risk as they suffer in times of
11
12 economic downturn (Sharma, 2016, p.119). Bernstein (2010) proposes that luxury is not only
13
14 about the décor or amenities. It is a subjective notion as it depends on people's perception of
15
16 luxury based on their ethnical belonging, culture of origin, educational background and
17
18 personal experience (Becker, 2009); the luxury hotel sector has become an outlet for travellers
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20 to dream of and fantasize about other lifestyles (Curtis, 2011), where customer-driven
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22 employees are valuable in providing the appropriate service and experience (Chung and
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24 D'Annunzio-Green, 2018). Despite the increasing significance of the luxury hotel sector in the
25
26 tourism and hospitality industry as well as the general economy, a systematic review of TM
27
28 related research has not been conducted. Most studies on talent management in hospitality have
29
30 the context of small-and-medium enterprises (for example Chung and D'Annunzio-Green,
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32 2018); therefore, this study provides valuable empirical research in this sector.
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41 2.3 Talent and talent management in hospitality

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43 Michaels *et al.* (2001) first referred to the 'war for talent', in defining talent; talent includes
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45 people's abilities, skills, knowledge and potential for development. TM was firstly mentioned
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47 by McKinsey Consultants as a management concept (Horner, 2017). Talent is perceived as a
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49 strategic resource for the competitiveness of organizations, as human capital has been
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51 identified as a way for organizations to gain and maintain the competitive advantage (Meyers
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53 *et al.*, 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013). Although TM has rapidly expanded globally there
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55 is a lot of academic debate about defining talent due to a lack of accurate and uniform
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1 definitions (Festing and Schafer, 2014). Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013) suggest that talent
2 definitions are based on individual perceptions of the nature of talent.
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8 9 2.3.1 Talent

10 There is a range of issues considered in the conceptualization of talent. Two main approaches
11 have been developed to define talent. The first refers to the debate based on the nature-nurture
12 debate about whether talent is inborn and innate, whereas others claim that talent can be
13 nurtured with proper training and development (Myers and van Woerkom, 2014).
14 Conceptualizing talent as a natural ability has implications on how talent will be managed. On
15 the one hand, skills and knowledge are easy to be developed and teach, but talent refers to
16 characteristics much more unique (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013), hence Davies and Davies
17 (2010) propose that talent cannot be managed. Similarly, Silzer and Dowell (2010) propose
18 that it is difficult for HR practice to distinguish between innate and malleable components of
19 talent. On the other hand, others claim that talent can be taught by experience and through
20 training and development, research that has been found to overlap with literature on
21 competence (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013). In this case they continue, talent is defined by its
22 outcomes, as some studies suggest some years of experience should be allowed to employees
23 in order to measure their performance and label them as talent.
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46 The second perspective refers to the inclusive and exclusive nature of talent. Some studies
47 propose that talent refers to the *inclusive nature* of talent where the entire workforce may be
48 included. Peters (2006) claims that all employees should be considered as talent. Most
49 companies in Leigh's (2009) study defined talent in an inclusive way. Buckingham and
50 Vosburgh, 2001, p.22) defined the inclusive approach to TM as "the art of recognizing where
51 each employee's areas of natural talent lie, and figuring out how to help each employee develop
52 the job-specific skills and knowledge to turn those talents into real performance". Employees
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2 create value and are seen to be the main determinant of organizational performance, so an
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4 inclusive approach guarantees an egalitarian distribution of resources across all employees in
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6 an organization. Although this approach is more cost-effective, the main criticism is that it
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8 refers to the whole workforce, implying that it is more a proper workforce management rather
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10 than TM and does not differ from strategic HRM (Garrow and Hirsh, 2008).
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15 Others refer to the *exclusive nature* of talent where an elite group of the workforce may be
16 included (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). The workforce in this approach is segmented into
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18 individuals who can make a difference to the organization. Within this approach, different
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20 authors have adopted different terms for talent such as ‘excellent abilities’, ‘key employees’
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22 ‘high potentials’ or ‘those individuals with high potential who are of particular value to an
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24 organization’ (Thunissen, 2016). Others identify as talent the high-performing employees who
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26 demonstrate high potential (Collings, 2014; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013; Meyers and van
27
28 Woerkom, 2014). Schuler (2015) suggests that talented employees have behaviors aligned to
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30 the company’s values, and are hard to find. Organizations should identify what they consider
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32 as talent and know who their valuable employees are (Schuler, 2015). Each organization may
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34 have its own understanding of talent and identify the profile that fits their structure and culture
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36 (D’Annunzio-Green, 2008). The main criticism of this approach is that performance is not
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38 based on objective indicators, but rather reflects perceptions and judgements by managers
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40 (Pepermans *et al.*, 2003). Similarly, there is the assumption that past performance predicts
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42 future performance, and that there is need for continuous support for acquiring certain
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44 performance levels (Martin and Schmidt, 2010). Finally, some studies propose that emphasis
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46 on individual performance undermines teamwork, runs the risk of creating a competitive
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48 working environment with damaged organizational morale as resources are spent of a small
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50 group of employees (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013).
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2 Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013) provide a conceptualised model of the meaning of talent as
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4 shown in figure 1.
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9 **Figure 1:** Talent at work

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11 *Insert Figure 1 here*
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13 **Source:** Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013, p.297)
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16 Baum (2008) suggests that there is need for talent and talent development in hospitality. Deery
17 and Jago (2015) and Sheehan *et al.* (2018) suggest that TM and recruitment is a challenge for
18 hospitality organizations. Methods for finding and keeping employees have changed in today's
19 complex and competitive environment (Baker, 2014; Baum, 2008). Recruitment and selection
20 in hospitality are challenging due to the highly labour-intensive nature of the industry (Baum,
21 2008), the seasonal and cyclical nature of the industry (Sheehan *et al.*, 2018), the dependency
22 on peripheral and often young employees (Janta and Ladkin, 2009). The sector provides global
23 labor mobility opportunities and has been a source of employment for migrants throughout the
24 world. Migrants have been a good option for many employers as they can contract their
25 workforce as per the demand fluctuation. However, migrants may not cover the skills gap that
26 exists in the industry, as usually they acquire training and experience and move to other sectors.
27 This may be detriment to the quality of the experience delivered to the customers and to the
28 long-term sustainability of hospitality organizations. Recruitment and selection for TM should
29 be done with a focus on core values and culture of the hotel, with more formal, structured and
30 strategically aligned approached to TM (Shaheen *et al.*, 2018). CIPD (2016) suggests that
31 effective TM includes the integration of the employment journey, with approached to attract,
32 identify, develop, engage, reward and retain talented people, which may sustain the competitive
33 advantage of the sector. Specific job analysis with skills gap identification may contribute to
34 recruiting activities that align to the supply of talent and relevant skills. During recruitment,
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2 potential employees should be able to see a clear occupation-career path in the organization, as
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4 this is found to impact on employee commitment.
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9 2.3.2 Talent management

10 Beheshtifar *et al.* (2012) add that TM refers basically to the process of talent identification and
11 development through targeting people that can play the role of a leader in the future. Scullion
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13 *et al.* (2010) describe TM as the systematic attraction, identification, development,
14 engagement/retention and deployment of talents. Paauwe (2004) and Wright and Nishii (2013)
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16 propose that TM is an *intended* strategy, in which related human resources practices are made
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18 by top management in accordance to the organization's objectives and overall strategy. The
19
20 main aim is to fulfil the needs for human capital and "to contribute to the overall firm
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22 performance" where all stakeholders contribute to this outcome (Thunissen, 2016, p. 59). In
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24 view to this, Collings (2014) argues that this rationale of TM may impact on effectively
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26 managing and developing talent. Other factors such as market pressures, or other non-economic
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28 objectives are largely ignored by the TM literature (Thunissen *et al.*, 2013).
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37 According to CIPD (2006, p.1) TM is "concerned with...identification, development,
38 engagement/retention, and deployment of 'talent' within a specific organisational context".
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40 CIPD (2006) also suggests that TM is nowadays used as a way of managing succession
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42 planning. The "hard approach" to TM is based on McGregor's theory X where "employees are
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44 seen as objects that need to be controlled and managed effectively; The focus is on measuring,
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46 controlling employees' performance and productivity" (Thunissen, 2016, p. 60). On the other
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48 hand, the "soft approach" is based on McGregor's theory Y where employees are seen to have
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50 their "own emotions and needs that direct their behaviour...their interests are parallel to the
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52 interests of the organization", where managers focus on practices that "enhance commitment
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54 and personal and professional development" (Thunissen, 2016, p.60). In any case, there is
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56 little empirical information on differences between the intended and the actual TM practices.
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2.4 Talent retention strategies for hotels

A number of factors and strategies have been identified in the literature to contribute to the retention of hotel employees. Training and development; opportunities for career progression (Moncarz *et al.*, 2009; Deery, 2008; Bharwani and Butt, 2012); compensation (Deery, 2008); and challenging work (Yang *et al.*, 2012) are *organizational* strategies. CIPD (2006) adds in-house development programmes on coaching, mentoring and buddying in the UK context. Lee and Way (2009) propose that positive interactions and communication between managers and employees contribute to retention. Effective recruitment is also important to ensure potential employees have realistic expectations of hospitality work; will demonstrate suitable personal characteristics for the job; and will fit with the organizational culture (Moncarz *et al.*, 2009; Pizam and Shani, 2009). Festing *et al.* (2013) propose that TM retention practices differ depending on the organization. They suggest that large organizations invest heavily on practices such as identifying young talent, employee training and development, career planning and succession planning.

Employee related factors include age, seniority, level of education and gender (Govaerts *et al.*, 2011). Mayers and van Woerkom (2014) propose generational differences in employees' expectations and retention strategies. Younger employees (Generation Y) demand career advancement opportunities more than Baby Boomers. These younger employees are attracted to the social environment in organizations (Scott and Revis, 2008). Moreover, Thunnissen *et al.* (2013) add emotional and cognitive aspects. The context of luxury hotels and their approach to talent and TM has been the focus of this study in an effort to provide suggestions on talent retention strategies that are important for organizational success.

3. Methods

3.1 Data collection

This study used an exploratory qualitative approach to collect data on TM and retention strategies in luxury hotels. Hatoum (2010) emphasizes the role of top management in the process of TM. Consequently 27 in-depth semi-structured exploratory interviews were conducted with Hotel General Managers, HR Directors / Managers and Line Managers at 27 different luxury hotels (independent operators and local chains). To ensure validity of the data and in an effort to do a comparative study, this research used data collected from four different countries: the US, the UK, Australia and Greece. Cross-national comparative research seeks to make comparisons across countries and in some cases of cultures with a purpose to identify similarities and differences in the phenomenon under investigation (Hantrais and Mangen, 2010). The purpose of this study was to explore whether talent and TM as well as retention strategies were similarly developed and applied to different contexts, hence a comparative study was adopted. Criticism on the comparative approach refers to the issue of data comparability due to the mix of countries (Hantrais and Mangen, 2010). Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunissen (2016) propose that the Anglo-Saxon countries dominate research in the field of TM, therefore these countries were comparable in terms of context and culture. Similarly, in their bibliographical search, they found that most of the studies on talent are conducted in the USA (46 articles), and some in Australia (28 articles). Akrivos *et al.* (2007) proposed in their study that career strategies in Greece had many similarities to the UK and Australia, hence they did not identify differences according to country or nationality. There is a call for more research on TM in different contexts (Davidson *et al.*, 2010; Tlaiss *et al.*, 2017); however, no studies were found to provide such comparison. Most studies collected empirical data by people living in the region rather than outside (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunissen, 2016; Stahl *et al.*, 2012). The comparative research strategy allowed the authors to identify gaps in knowledge and sharpen the focus of analysis by suggesting new theories and perspectives in TM (Hantrais and

1
2 Mangan, 2010). The aggregate level approach strategy was adopted in order to improve
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4 international understanding of talent and TM, and examine transnational processes across
5
6 different contexts. The nations were seen as the context of the study, but also as a unit of a
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8 larger system (Kohn, 1987), namely the hospitality and tourism industry.
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13 Paauwe and Boseli (2005, p. 58) propose that cross national studies and comparative research
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15 is effective when studying homogeneity of HRM practices across organisations; Gallardo-
16
17 Gallardo and Thunissen (2016, p.36) propose that “TM is linked to the academic field of
18
19 HRM”. In view to this, luxury hotels were part of the sample; as studies propose the hotel size
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21 may be a factor to consider since “larger hotels are more likely to adopt HRM strategies and
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23 practices reducing turnover rates, especially at the luxury hotel sector” (Davidson *et al.*, 2010,
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25 p. 456). In comparative studies, comparable measures should be set in studying the
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27 phenomenon (Hantrais and Mangan, 2010; Gharawi *et al.*, 2009). In this study, the same hotel
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29 class and participants’ positions in the hotels were the comparable measures (details provided
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31 in Table 1). Stahl *et al.* (2012) suggest that it is difficult to define luxury hotels due to what the
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33 term luxury entails. The World Luxury Index (2017) provides three types, the upper scale
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35 brand, the luxury major integrated chain and the luxury exclusive small medium sized hotels.
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37 The hotels in the sample belong to these three categories. The global luxury hotel market size
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39 was valued at USD 83.10 billion in 2017 (Grand View Research, 2018), therefore such
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41 organizations would benefit from retaining talent and hence they would have HRM policies on
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43 TM with retention strategies in place. All studies on talent and TM focus mainly on small and
44
45 medium enterprises looking at TM at the macro level of a country (Gallardo-Gallardo and
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47 Thunissen, 2016, p.40). The value of this research is the focus on luxury hotels as no other
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49 studies with similar context were found and TM issues at a group level i.e. job/sector are under-
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51 explored (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunissen, 2016, p.40).
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Table 1: Hotels' and Participants' profile

Insert table 1 here

The interviews were conducted by one of the authors and a research assistant to enhance research triangulation (Tlaiss *et al.*, 2017), and to ensure consistency in data collection in comparative studies (Hantrais and Mangen, 2010). The 27 interviewees held managerial positions in the 27 hotels within the sample, and included male and female managers of different ages. As high matching of participants should be maintained in comparative research, personal contacts were essential in obtaining the required data (Teagarden *et al.*, 1995).

Non-probability sampling – specifically, convenience sampling - was used where subjects were selected based on their accessibility, proximity to the researchers, and their willingness to participate at the study (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). The subjects of the population were easily accessible to the researchers (Etikan *et al.*, 2016) in the case of the UK and Greece. The first six participants (2 from the UK and 4 from Greece) were acquaintances of the researchers. With snowball sampling the researchers were introduced to others willing to participate in the study. In total, twelve participants were identified by this method. The remaining nine participants were identified based on judgemental sampling, by the authors' network through LinkedIn, again with convenience sampling. Emails were sent to participants informing them about the study and those who responded were added to the interview list. Participants in this case were chosen based on the profile and the position they hold in different luxury hospitality organizations in any of the four countries. The target population was considered to be homogeneous. They were chosen due to their suitability to the purpose of the study. All participants in the study were likely to have power to influence retention strategies and/or were involved in TM (Preece *et al.*, 2013). The selection and definition of objects in this comparative study were done in a systematic way in order to produce and analyse the data in a comparative

1 way (Gharawi *et al.*, 2009). In order to address the criticism of the sampling technique and
2 whether it used samples representing the population (Etikan *et al.*, 2016), the individuals were
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4 selected based on the following criteria: their background; their position in the hotel and their
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6 access to information; their impact on TM and retention; and their willingness to participate to
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8 the study and share knowledge with the researchers. Although the results may not be
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10 representative of the population, due to the sample size, this exploratory study relied on
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12 analytical generalization, as the authors tried to generalize the results to some broader theory
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14 (Yin, 1989).
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22 The interviews took place in the participants' office to ensure privacy and to avoid losing
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24 interest and interruption (Altinay and Paraskevas, 2008). They lasted between 50 to 135
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26 minutes and all were conducted in English except those in Greece that were conducted in
27
28 Greek. The interviews in Greek were translated after they were transcribed. The translations
29
30 were checked by the authors and the research assistant who were all fluent in Greek and
31
32 English. Language is an issue on comparative research, but in this study only in the case of
33
34 Greece. The challenge of translation was overcome as the authors were native speakers, they
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36 were knowledgeable of the culture, with specialization on the area and no translation cost was
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38 associated with this task (Gharawi *et al.*, 2009, p.4).
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46 With the permission of participants, the interviews were recorded, and the researchers also took
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48 notes. At the beginning, all participants were informed about the confidentiality and anonymity
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50 of the interviews. The initial template which was shared with participants by email prior to the
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52 interviews included four main categories of questions. The questions for the semi-structured
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54 interviews were based on the research questions developed by the authors after having read the
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56 relevant literature. The first category included general information on turnover and turnover
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58 reasons in hospitality in order to identify any turnover issues in the sample hotels. The second
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2 category included constructs to identify and define talent in order to explore how the
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4 participants in the study understand talent and in an effort to conceptualise and provide a
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6 definition of talent in hospitality. The third category included questions to identify TM
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8 practices. Finally, the fourth category pertained to strategies, initiatives, policies and/or
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10 practices to retain talent in the hotels of the study.
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16 Bryman (2008) claims that it is impossible to determine the number of interviews needed for a
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18 study, but he proposes that a minimum of 20 may be adequate. Data collection stopped when
19
20 the researchers observed saturation and repetitiveness was evident in the responses (Fontaine
21
22 *et al.*, 2013) with 27 complete interviews. Even when 17 interviews were conducted the
23
24 researchers noticed repeating issues identified by participants. In addition, there were
25
26 limitations in terms of time as the data collection had to be completed within a time frame of
27
28 two months due to funding conditions.
29
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31
32
33

34 *3.2 Data analysis*

35
36 The recordings and the notes taken during the interviews contributed to the data analysis and
37
38 informed the three themes and discussion points that emerged from the interviews. Thematic
39
40 analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was adopted to determine, analyse and report patterns
41
42 (themes) in the data. Themes are patterns identified in the data that aid in the description and
43
44 explanation of the phenomena under investigation, in this case TM and talent retention. Six
45
46 stages were utilised to identify the themes that aid in explaining TM and talent retention in the
47
48 hospitality industry. The interviews were transcribed, and then through repeated reading initial
49
50 ideas were noted. Coding then took place, putting these initial ideas into sub-themes. Each sub-
51
52 theme was reviewed based on their meaning and relationships with a focus on talent and talent
53
54 retention. The nurture/nature and exclusivity/inclusivity perspectives were the themes in the
55
56 initial codes given the current literature on talent and TM. Naming themes subsequently took
57
58
59
60

1 place and finally each theme was refined with its relevance to the project. Kohn (1987, p.714)
2
3
4 proposed that in “cross-national research such as that in which “[...] comparable data from two
5
6 or more nations are systematically used”. Therefore, the analysis provided discusses findings
7
8
9 from a comparison among the four countries in the sample population.
10

11 12 13 **4. Findings and Discussion**

14
15 Three key themes emerged from the data analysis. The first was on factors that contribute to
16
17 employee turnover in the context of luxury hotels. The second included organizational
18
19 definitions of talent and TM. The third provided the elements of TM within the organizations
20
21 in the study, and talent retention strategies used in luxury hotels. Scott and Revis (2008)
22
23 proposed that although some TM studies focus on multiple countries there are no studies
24
25 explaining the differences if any between the countries involved. Thus, the data analysis was
26
27 undertaken in a comparative way among the four countries.
28
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32 33 34 *4.1 Employee turnover*

35
36 The authors wanted to explore whether employee turnover factors accorded with the key issues
37
38 identified in the academic literature. Participants were asked to identify the reasons why their
39
40 employees leave. The main factors identified included (in order of importance); lack of
41
42 progression opportunities; organizational culture and organizational fit including required
43
44 attitudes towards work in hospitality; the management team; salary; the working conditions;
45
46 generational characteristics; the location of the establishment; career change; and the seasonal
47
48 operation of the particular businesses (mainly in the case of Greece).
49
50
51

52
53
54 Lack of progression opportunities for talented employees was a key factor that contributed to
55
56 turnover and was evident across all countries. Talented employees seek a challenging work
57
58 environment and were looking for opportunities for progression and development to reduce
59
60

1
2 their intention to leave. These opportunities can be offered through providing employees with
3
4 internal promotions and/or opportunities to engage in activities that enhance their professional
5
6 experience, learning and development (such as hotel openings). One reason for lack of
7
8 progression opportunities contributing to turnover was that talented employees pursued career
9
10 development. As such they became impatient in waiting for advancement opportunities,
11
12 particularly in relation to promotions within their own organizations.
13
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17

18 Another issue raised was organizational culture and culture fit. Although organizations in the
19
20 study provided training and development opportunities for cultural awareness, these were not
21
22 designed for individuals. They were rather one-size-fits-all sessions, which were not well
23
24 accepted by employees, who consequently found it difficult to fit into the organizational
25
26 culture. Other turnover issues included poor or lack of communication, unfair treatment and
27
28 lack of support and guidance by the management team towards talented employees.
29
30
31
32
33

34 The remuneration offered to talented employees was another factor identified that contributing
35
36 to turnover. Most participants noted that their organizations strive to offer a higher salary than
37
38 other businesses in the market, to offer a more attractive employee package. However, the
39
40 analysis indicated that the salary factor was of less importance in comparison to offering
41
42 progression opportunities and a good organizational culture in talent retention. On the other
43
44 hand, salary was mentioned as a contributing factor to career change and a move to other
45
46 industries (in the US and Australia) or to companies that offered a higher salary (in the UK and
47
48 Greece). Poor pay in hospitality is often cited as a factor that contributes to the high turnover
49
50 of the industry (Baum, 2008; Horner, 2017). However, this is an industry-wide issue that is
51
52 beyond the scope of this study, since the focus of this paper is on retaining talented employees
53
54 seeking a career in hospitality.
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4.2 Defining talent

Interestingly all participants in the study shared similar views on what they considered as talent in their organizations. They all consider talent those '*Who take a step further...those who go above and beyond*' (PUS5), or according to another participant: *Talent is someone who thinks outside the box, who finds solutions, it is combination of knowledge and experience, who is looking for results...* (PUS6).

Each organization has its own culture and employees are required to fit in this culture. On this note, a talented employee was defined as: *Someone who has the knowledge and skills to excel at the job, has the potential for growth and development. Someone who gives opportunities to people to grow within the company. Someone who shows the potential for future development, who fits the organizational culture and hence we can invest in them* (PUS19).

Others referred to personal characteristics. For example, a participant in Greece noted when identifying a talented employee: *She was very driven to learn and she was intelligent. Of course, you can be intelligent but you might not be a talent; she was driven, she wanted to learn. It is very important to hold on to such employees. These employees love their work, they will give it their all, they love the job they love the customer and they love the organization and they will give it their all* (PGR1).

In the Greek context participants referred to talent as people who demonstrate consistency in their performance and have goals. PGR2 stated: *An individual must be extrovert, methodical, hardworking, to be able to be part of a team, and work as a team, be consistent in their performance. A talented person must have goals and express these goals.*

1
2 Interestingly another interviewee (PGR4) noted the need to understand the working
3 environment and the conditions in the industry: *A talented employee is someone who has the*
4 *intelligence and the maturity to understand his/her working environment, meaning his/her*
5 *colleagues and clients, and to adjust his/her knowledge and skills with the goal to satisfy both*
6 *colleagues and clients.*
7
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13
14
15 In the Australian context participants shared similar views on talent. They identified talent as
16 those with the right personality to work in the industry and show pride in their organization:
17 *Personality does win over the degree in all occasions...the talented are those who show pride*
18 *of their organization (PAU11).*
19
20
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25
26
27 Similarly, participants in the UK mentioned drive, and the potential for the future. For example,
28 PUK14 said: *I think it is someone that you see an element of potential in them, you see a drive.*
29 *It is a little bit difficult [...] I think it is what is their potential for the future, which is either*
30 *seen or unseen, by other people or by themselves sometimes.* PUK21 argued that *'talent starts*
31 *with the want and the passion to put yourself out and to listen and take these corrections on*
32 *board'*.
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43 Talent was conceptualised in terms of specific characteristics and traits people have, which
44 were either nurtured or developed in the company. More specifically, personality was identified
45 as the main characteristic of talent. All participants acknowledged the proper personality as a
46 key characteristic for employment in hospitality. They recruited people who demonstrated
47 attitudes and behaviours they found appropriate such as smiling people, who were service-
48 oriented and showed a willingness to pursue a career in hospitality. Other qualities included a
49 drive to succeed and willingness to go above and beyond their main responsibilities, being
50 service oriented, and showing the potential and willingness to grow and be further developed.
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1
2 These elements of talent accord with definitions in the literature highly influenced by the
3
4 specific industry (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013).
5
6
7

8 9 *4.3 TM and talent retention strategies in luxury hotels*

10
11 The findings of this study suggested that luxury hotels take both an exclusive and inclusive
12
13 approach to talent (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013). On the one hand, all participants proposed
14
15 that in their organizations they assume that all employees have talents that can be used in the
16
17 organization (inclusive approach). On the other hand, they stated they identify those with the
18
19 talent as those in special groups of individuals in the organization who are considered to have
20
21 strengths and the ability to be talented at their chosen job roles (exclusive approach) when
22
23 deciding on giving opportunities for further development. For example, PUK14 stated:
24
25

26
27 *I do perceive all our colleagues as talented, because we also appreciate that there is a*
28 *number of colleagues who are extremely passionate about the role that they do. They are*
29 *happy with the role and don't seek to progress further.*
30
31

32
33 Hence, they provide all employees with the opportunity and it depends on those who were
34
35 aspirational and willing to take up these opportunities to be included in any TM programme.
36
37 All organizations in the study adopted a hybrid approach and offered TM programmes at
38
39 different levels. They offered programmes designed for all employees and others bespoke to
40
41 their most talented employees talent. One reason for this 'hybrid' approach (Stahl *et al.*, 2012)
42
43 may be that the majority of participants stated that talent needs to be nurtured. In other words,
44
45 although an employee may be considered as talent or potential talent, this talent needs to be
46
47 furthered nurtured and developed, through constant training and learning, in order to grow top
48
49 talent for the organization. Therefore, the fact that some talented employees were differentiated
50
51 (exclusive approach) and offered further opportunities not available to all employees was not
52
53 surprising. Organizations in the study aimed to invest and provide opportunities for potentially
54
55 talented employees to develop into top talent. For this purpose, some participants stated that
56
57 they monitor their turnover rates on a monthly basis.
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2
3
4 TM for participants started with job design and the recruitment process. Emphasis was placed
5
6 on personality rather than the technical ability, experience or relevant degrees, confirming
7
8 Barron *et al.*'s (2014) study. A participant from Greece (PGR22) stated:
9

10
11 *The difficulty of an interviewer in a job interview is that in the first ten minutes the*
12 *interviewer must understand the personality of the interviewee, to understand whether*
13 *this person is a good fit for you.*
14

15
16 Respondents from the US and the UK also emphasized the personality identification with a 2-
17
18 3 minutes talk when they ask candidates to talk about themselves and their views and opinions
19
20 about work in the industry. They adopted a behavioural interview style during which they tried
21
22 to identify a potential match of the candidate to the organizational culture. In the same context
23
24 participants highlighted the benefits of developing a successful brand in terms of human
25
26 resources management. They proposed that if their brand is successful people (and therefore
27
28 talent) will want to work for them providing them with a larger pool of talent. Many discussed
29
30 the challenge of people's perception of work in the hospitality industry, hence they tried to
31
32 instil pride in the company and create awareness of their good human resources practices in
33
34 the labor force to attract talent. PUK17 mentioned that: *Unfortunately, in the UK, hospitality*
35
36 *is seen as like a second-class industry to go into due to labels such as long hours and low pay.*
37
38 *Which is a huge shame, as there is so much potential for a great career.* PAU10 said that:
39
40 *...people come to work with us because of our reputation as employers, they know what they*
41
42 *will get and our brand provides them with some security and safety in their employment.* PUS27
43
44 argued that: *We may also just be looking for the right people at the right time at the right place.*
45
46 *For us is very important our brand, and our own individual brand is well looked after because*
47
48 *it is harder for us to attract people, no one is going to put our name in google, it is not well*
49
50 *known outside our area, so if we get that [our reputation] wrong it will be quite difficult for us*
51
52 *to attract people.*
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1
2 This study confirms King's (2010) proposal that employees need to have information and
3
4 knowledge of the company's brand in order to be able to exhibit desired behaviours (p.519).
5
6 Brand knowledge has also been found to reduce employee turnover in hospitality (Kazlauskaite
7
8 *et al.*, 2006), and contributes to role clarity and brand commitment among employees (King,
9
10 2010).
11
12
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14

15
16 Although participants in the study agreed that TM is a regular, daily process only a few
17
18 organizations seemed to have an explicit retention scheme. The majority described an *ad hoc*
19
20 approach. The cases where TM was planned and systematic were identified only in the UK
21
22 context. Participants from the US, Australia and Greece acknowledged the importance of TM.
23
24 However, in all cases in these three countries any strategies were decided during the annual
25
26 performance process. Following a 'hard' and inclusive approach most practices were imposed
27
28 by top management with limited consideration of employees' personal drives and views on
29
30 their development. This finding contradicts findings by Thunnissen (2016), who found
31
32 exclusive programmes offered, perhaps because her study was among academics and not
33
34 hotels. On the contrary, examples from UK hotels suggested they had systematic planned
35
36 approaches to TM, which were regularly communicated to employees.
37
38
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43 Several talent retention strategies were identified. These strategies were divided in **two**
44
45 categories. **The one that includes employees' practices and the other that refers to employee**
46
47 **relationships. In terms of employee practices,** the *organizational practices and organizational*
48
49 *culture* influence the experience employees have with the company on a daily basis. Various
50
51 elements of organizational culture were identified with one predominant in all four countries:
52
53 the opportunity for flexibility regarding work schedules. Rotas were available to staff and they
54
55 were given the freedom to make changes upon agreement with their supervisors. This created
56
57 a friendly, family-oriented working environment where good relationships were developed,
58
59
60

1
2 and led to staff satisfaction and motivation. A participative management style was evident
3
4 among all managers, which provided evidence of an inclusive approach and an organizational
5
6 culture that provides flexibility and interactive relationships (Akrivos *et al.*, 2007). Another
7
8 hotel in the UK offers child care for their employees with families. Their hotel is located in
9
10 London making it difficult for their employees to take care of their children when they finish
11
12 school, hence they provide such facilities for free. Moreover, they offer excellent staff facilities
13
14 (PUS19), and even allow staff to use the hotel gym upon registration (PUK14).
15
16
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19

20 Succession planning strategies were evident only in the UK context. As already discussed
21
22 organizations in the UK seemed to be more organized and proactive. They had specific
23
24 management programmes to support succession planning. For example, PUK16 mentioned an
25
26 apprenticeship management development programme, and an internal management
27
28 development programme. With the latter talented employees were given the opportunity to
29
30 travel abroad to attend industry specific conferences, network with industry people, and
31
32 observe competition.
33
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38

39 *Training and development* were valued by participants. In most cases, training took the form
40
41 of *ad hoc* programmes offered by consultants in the region, for example the case of Greece.
42
43 They were mainly generic i.e. on sales, or customer service. In the US and Australia training
44
45 programmes were general for all in the company and most of them were agreed during the
46
47 annual performance activities. However, in the UK the training programmes available were
48
49 planned and tailor-made to individuals. These programmes included leadership and
50
51 management training offered by universities, such as the programmes offered by the Institute
52
53 of Leadership and Management (L3 and L5) (PUK21). PUK12 stated: *So it is quite a robust*
54
55 *programme, we manage it ourselves based on each individual and what they want to get out of*
56
57 *it.*
58
59
60

1
2
3
4 Challenging work with opportunities to learn were promoted and encouraged. Feedback and
5
6 performance appraisal was done on an annual basis but also more often to discuss progress and
7
8 development opportunities. PUK14 stated: *After those meetings, we also have talent meetings*
9
10 *twice a year where all of us as managers we sit together for a couple of hours and we discuss*
11
12 *all the individuals within their teams, so they are able to get feedback from everybody.*

13
14
15
16
17
18 Compensation was discussed by all participants. In the US, the UK and Australia organizations
19
20 in the study pay their employees above the average in the sector in their regions. Hence,
21
22 employees rarely use their salary as an excuse to look for employment elsewhere. In Greece,
23
24 salaries were an important issue due to the financial situation in the country. All managers
25
26 repeatedly said, “*we pay our employees on time*” (PGR2), “*we pay what we promised*” (PGR4),
27
28 “*we secure their jobs*” (PGR24). Other monetary awards were discussed such as benefits,
29
30 discount vouchers, discounts for family and friends to stay at the hotel, and prizes.
31
32
33
34
35

36 **In terms of employee relationships engagement was the main issue.** *Engagement activities* were
37
38 discussed. Engagement and retention are found to correlate in many studies (Christensen-
39
40 Hughes and Rog, 2008). Empowering talent has been a priority in luxury hotels in the study.
41
42 All participants agreed that participation at decision-making, allowing people to take initiatives
43
44 were important to developing talent. They allowed employees (especially departmental
45
46 managers) to take part at the recruitment process. Team spirit and team building activities such
47
48 as parties, clubs and sports engaged employees in socializing activities as managers believed
49
50 these increase loyalty and commitment to the organization, as they all feel part of a ‘family’.
51
52 PUK 15 claimed they had an ‘Engagement calendar’ with activities planned and organised by
53
54 employees (which included birthday cakes, fun days, a national pizza day, games and quizzes),
55
56 charity and community work, as well as meetings with non-managerial staff every four months
57
58
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60

1
2 to explore opinions on various issues. Interestingly, PUK26 said that: *At orientation people*
3
4 *spend the night at the hotel and are given £50 to spend on food, breakfast is offered as well.*
5
6
7

8
9 A message that came across was that people were valued, and during such events they
10 participated at setting organizational goals, as well as goals for personal development. A
11 participant (PUS8) said: *We recognise those who go above and beyond, colleagues of the*
12
13 *month, quarter usually those are nominated by their peers. We engage staff in the hiring*
14
15 *process, recruitment is initiated by the department, and HR does the screening it is an inclusive*
16
17 *process.*
18
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25 Empowerment and acknowledgement of achievement were prominent factors. Participants
26 proposed that organizational policies are in place to praise employees and acknowledge
27 achievement. They provide them with autonomy and ensure that their ideas and opinions were
28 heard. Nevertheless, participants valued this talent that had the drive and interest in having a
29 career in hospitality. PUK16 offered what they call the ‘Entrepreneur scheme’ open to external
30 candidates. This is a six months programme where talent works on a project for one of the
31 hotels in the company. At the end, they write and present a report in an effort of the company
32 to encourage the candidates to work in the sector. Other activities identified by PUK21 were
33 employee of the year, employee of the quarter, and ‘thank you’ dinners. PUK25 added the wow
34 story of the month (from TripAdvisor or customers feedback) with a prize of £100.
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50 Effective communication between the management and talent was found to be significant.
51 Regular meetings, briefings, dissemination and sharing of information were discussed by the
52 participants. PAU7 said they hold “*daily meetings*”. Such communication worked in favour of
53 the company as they had direct access to people, and they became aware of intentions to leave
54 early (which allowed proper planning) and at the same time employees felt they were valued,
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1
2 developing rapport and low power-distance relationships which contribute positively to
3
4 retention and leads to an engaged workforce (Christensen-Hughes and Rog, 2008).
5
6
7

8
9 Coaching and mentoring were also offered; only one hotel in the US offered a ‘buddy scheme’
10
11 where experienced members of staff were linked with newly appointed or less experienced
12
13 employees. In the UK, ‘In-your-shoes’ a two day shadowing programme was offered as part
14
15 of management trainee programme for succession planning (PUK15), but no other reference
16
17 was made to similar strategies.
18
19

20
21
22 Some other *general strategies* were presented. Work-life balance was an issue especially for
23
24 younger employees (Thunnissen, 2016) and those with families. Flexible schedules and child
25
26 care were introduced to help talented employees recharge emotionally and psychologically.
27
28 Workload was also managed with regular breaks for coffee (PAU7). It should be noted that
29
30 many participants conduct exit interviews in order to identify the reasons why people leave and
31
32 perhaps try to convince them to stay with alternative opportunities and offers.
33
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38
39 Some participants in the study articulated issues in attracting talent. They expressed their
40
41 concern about the need for luxury service awareness and the need to hire people who would be
42
43 able to deliver such service. They acknowledged the need to be proactive in identifying talent
44
45 and in TM, which could be used as a selling point to attract talent. PAU9 stressed the need to
46
47 have discussions with industry stakeholders to identify difficulties in finding talent. All of the
48
49 above are summarized in the following figure adapted from Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013)
50
51 based on the findings of this study.
52
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55
56

57 **Figure 2: Conceptual model from findings**

58
59 *Insert Figure 2 here*
60

5. Conclusions

Talent and TM have not been widely researched in the hospitality context, hence this study provides an insight of talent definition and TM and retention strategies using empirical evidence from a comparative study in luxury hotels in four countries. This paper builds on the TM model proposed by Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013) and contributes with a conceptual framework provided in Figure 2 which demonstrates how the model is adapted in hospitality has been developed. More specifically, professionals provided a definition of talent and they consider talent as those who are special, have competencies valued by the company, behaviors aligned with the company's values and culture, are hard to find, are hard to replace, can add a great deal of value to the company, have options to leave at any time, and can help shape future strategic directions of the company. But more importantly, according to this study's participants 'talent refers to those who take a step further' and 'go above and beyond'. Therefore, talent in this study is identified as 'the employee who thinks outside the box and can make decisions, has knowledge and expertise in his/her area, is willing to learn and progress in his/her career, is adaptable to various circumstances with a customer-driven personality and may fit the organizational culture'.

The most important finding of this study is that UK hotels were found to offer human resource practices in TM and retention which were more effective, systematic and planned in comparison to the other three sample countries. Hughes and Rog (2008) and Baum (2008) proposed that recruitment and selection in the hospitality industry in the UK has been an issue. Hotel managers are challenged by the scarcity of trained experienced employees and staff retention; hence they were forced to develop HR practices to address these issues, which perhaps may justify the rapid TM development in HR in hospitality.

1 This study proposes that luxury hotels adopt a *hybrid* TM approach in an effort to be inclusive
2 and implement diversity management strategies. They have both an exclusive and an inclusive
3 approach with the implicit engagement of the individuals as well. In terms of inclusivity, TM
4 is seen as a continuous systematic process with a strategic approach to training and
5 development of talent with the potential to provide opportunities to employees to grow and
6 progress in the organization. They offer opportunities to all employees to be developed as they
7 believe that depending on the positions and employees' characteristics they may demonstrate
8 talent in what they do. At the same time, they identify specific talent to individuals who have
9 the potential to progress and have a career in the organization. Following an exclusive approach
10 hospitality organizations personalize the talent development process for effective retention.
11 Organizations in this case do not focus on a 'one-size-fits-all' approach in TM, but, aim to
12 understand the development needs of each talented employee and offer the appropriate
13 opportunities to achieve that.

14 In each approach, they use a number of employee practices or strategies that impact on
15 employee relationships. In any case they develop a culture in which talented people are top
16 priority (Steward and Rigg, 2011). This is building an effective HR systems where employees
17 show high levels of engagement that maximizes employee commitment to the organization and
18 in most cases reported reduces employee turnover. Interestingly, their main concern is
19 organizational performance matched with employee well-being.

20 The main strategies to retain talent in the luxury hotel sector in the Western context include a
21 friendly, family-oriented and open access culture, teamwork, mentoring, leadership,
22 compensation, succession planning and training and development in agreement to other studies
23 (Deery, 2008; Hughes and Rog, 2008; Barron *et al.*, 2014; Hejase *et al.*, 2016). The findings
24 of this study accord with those of Scott and Revis (2008) in proposing that hospitality managers

1
2 should ensure that talented employees remain loyal with increased job satisfaction by creating
3
4 such an environment where people have the feeling of a family and therefore are more
5
6 committed. In line with Deery and Jago (2015), this study also proposes that hospitality
7
8 organizations should create brand knowledge and awareness of their HR practices in order to
9
10 attract talent. Organizational policies should promote the empowerment of talented employees
11
12 by offering a certain level of autonomy, and the feeling their ideas and opinions are heard.
13
14 Similarly, a good work-life balance is also found to contribute to talent retention, especially
15
16 for the millennials (see also Deery and Jago, 2015).
17
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21

22 This paper proposes two categories of talent retention strategies, the employee practices and
23
24 employee relationships strategies. The data analysis indicated that *organizational practices*
25
26 should strive to develop an organizational culture that incorporates flexible work schedules, a
27
28 friendly open environment and good internal communication. *Intrinsic motivation* with staff
29
30 empowerment and achievement recognition activities were also discussed. *Monetary* awards
31
32 and compensation are used in luxury hotels. However, in agreement to Yang *et al.* (2012) a
33
34 large majority of employees in this study left because they were offered a better position or
35
36 better employment conditions rather than because of remuneration issues. *Engagement*
37
38 activities allowing participation at decision-making, taking initiatives, including employees in
39
40 planning and organizing team building activities were also recommended. *Training and*
41
42 *development* should be strategically and systematically designed for individuals through
43
44 performance appraisal and other informal discussions with talent. Sophisticated systems should
45
46 be in place preparing employees for the transition period to promotion and/or professional
47
48 development. *Other strategies* could be introduced such as child care. Interestingly, succession
49
50 planning was identified as a systematic approach of retention and of talent progression only in
51
52 the UK context.
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5.1 Theoretical implications

Summarizing the above, this study is the first to provide a theoretical approach to talent and TM in hospitality with evidence from four different countries addressing the need identified by current studies on universal modes to explain TM (Tlaiss *et al.*, 2017). The authors suggest that there is uniform definition of talent in all four countries which includes personality, a drive for success, a service-orientation and a willingness for personal development. The authors argue that this could be a definition of talent in hospitality, which is organizationally specific and influenced by the characteristics of the hospitality industry. People with these characteristics are valued in the industry and are perceived as talent, which interestingly is a challenge for managers to find. This study proposes that participative management styles are found to be valued in luxury hospitality organizations, with talent retention initiatives that provide flexibility and highly interactive relationships, and work structures that facilitate work-life balance for high performance organizations with reduced staff turnover.

5.2 Practical implications

This study proposes that that key factors in retaining talent in hospitality include challenging and new opportunities for employees to grow with an organizational culture and a brand that may influence the retentions of talented employees. Employers in hospitality should enhance the work environment in terms of conditions and remuneration (Baum, 2008) and determine talent in their organizations. TM should be a proactive practice, recognized and valued by hospitality organizations. Hospitality managers should recognize talent in the process of recruitment, retention and development for effective operation (Baum, 2008). The authors suggest that a soft exclusive approach could be adopted in TM by involving talent in the decision of their training and development programmes. Criteria should be linked to performance appraisal, to job satisfaction interviews, and discussions with talent.

1
2 Individuals seem to look internally for further development and progressing with their careers
3
4 and if these opportunities are not available they will search externally (as noted by Akrivos *et*
5
6 *al.* (2007). This study in agreement to others (Akrivos *et al.*, 2007; Ladkin, 2002) proposes that
7
8 human resource managers could use internal promotions as a way of retaining talent and from
9
10 keeping the employees who are valuable to the organization from moving to another company.
11
12 Career management is important in TM. A systematic approach is required to facilitate a long-
13
14 term approach to employee development. Individuals may benefit from a career plan developed
15
16 for them and the business may be able to proactively manage succession planning (Thunnissen,
17
18 2016). Such practices may contribute to the identification of talent and future leaders in
19
20 hospitality management, filling vacancies from within the organization rather than looking to
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22 external sources; a practice that is cost effective (Cannell, 2007).
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30 Succession planning may help motivate, engage and identify people's potential, propose
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32 development and promotion and hence show talented employees the potential for remaining in
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34 the organization. The authors propose that hospitality organizations should develop such
35
36 business aptitude to connect the organizational cultural values to the cultural fit of talented
37
38 employees, mix experience, learning and coaching, involve talent in various projects in order
39
40 to prepare them for career opportunities and promotion in the organization. The challenge in
41
42 the industry is to retain talent, ensuring that appropriate recruitment, selection and career
43
44 management may contribute to appropriately skilled and motivated employees who are more
45
46 likely to be retained (Thunnissen, 2016). The organization should recruit high achievers, invest
47
48 in their training and support them to develop their career by creating leaders which strengthens
49
50 the human capital and builds on the organization's human resources competitive advantage.
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52
53
54 The findings propose that recognition of any generational differences is required for TM in
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56 hospitality. Younger employees (and/or those with families) are interested in autonomy,
57
58 flexible work arrangements, an inclusive management style and organizational cultures that
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60

1 facilitate a good work-life balance. The authors suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach is not
2 appropriate for TM and retention strategies, as these should be tailor-made to the individual.
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8 *5.3 Limitations and future research*

9
10 In terms of further research, studies should be conducted to explore human resource practices
11 in TM and retention at the level of individual personality characteristics, and at different
12 organizational levels and structures. The literature emphasises the importance of TM in an
13 organisation's success, especially in the labour-intensive services sector (i.e. Baum, 2008). In
14 the hospitality industry context, it is critical to retain talented employees through effective
15 talent retention strategies (Watson, 2008; Maxwell and MacLean, 2008). The definition of
16 talent from a hospitality industry perspective may have a different meaning from other sectors
17 of the economy (Baum, 2008). Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunissen (2016) propose that there is
18 little work published on line managers' perception of talent and TM. There is also a paucity of
19 empirical findings on TM (Thunissen, 2016) hence this study also supports the need for
20 further research especially on the perception and views of employees regarding TM and
21 retention practices in hospitality.
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41 The context of the luxury hotel sector was used for this study. The challenges in hospitality
42 underpin its operations and particularly influence the way human resources are managed
43 (Gannon *et al.*, 2015). Powell *et al.* (2013) highlight the dominance of large, private
44 organizations in TM research. The authors propose further research should be conducted in
45 SMEs as the context may impact on retention strategies. Also, a comparison between different
46 types of organization could provide more information and knowledge on retention strategies.
47 Although, the hospitality sector has been characterised as a low skills sector with the Western-
48 centric perception of work and skills (Baum, 2008), this paper provides a more rounded
49 evaluation of talent and TM in hotels in a Western context with evidence from four countries
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(U.S.A., U.K., Australia and Greece). This study did not investigate the reasons behind the absence of formal talent retention strategies, but further research could identify whether these should be sector or organization specific.

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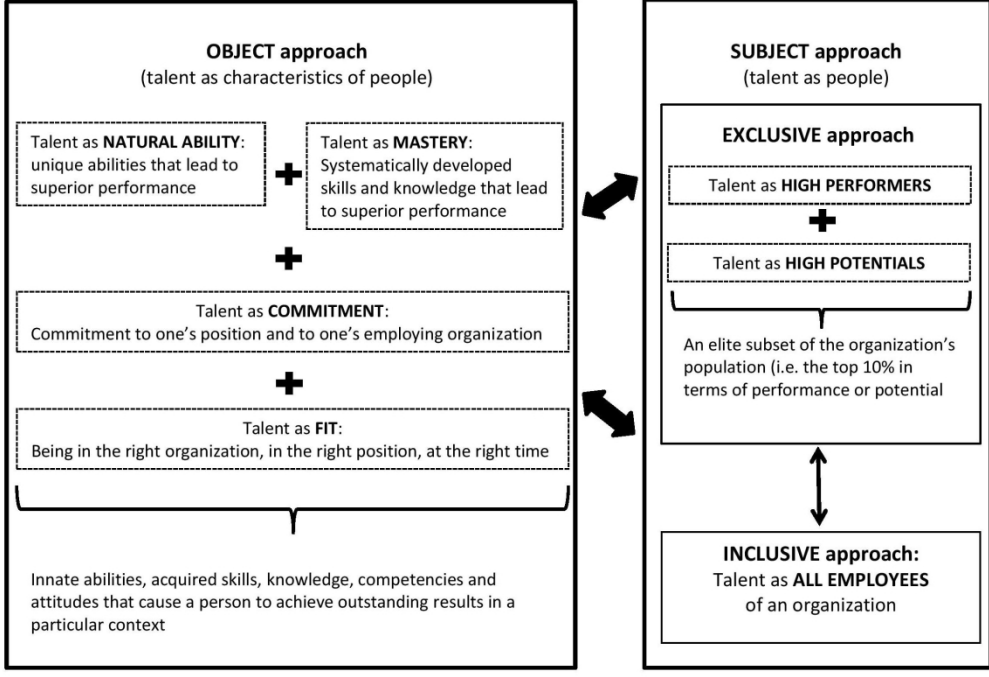


Figure 1

189x131mm (300 x 300 DPI)

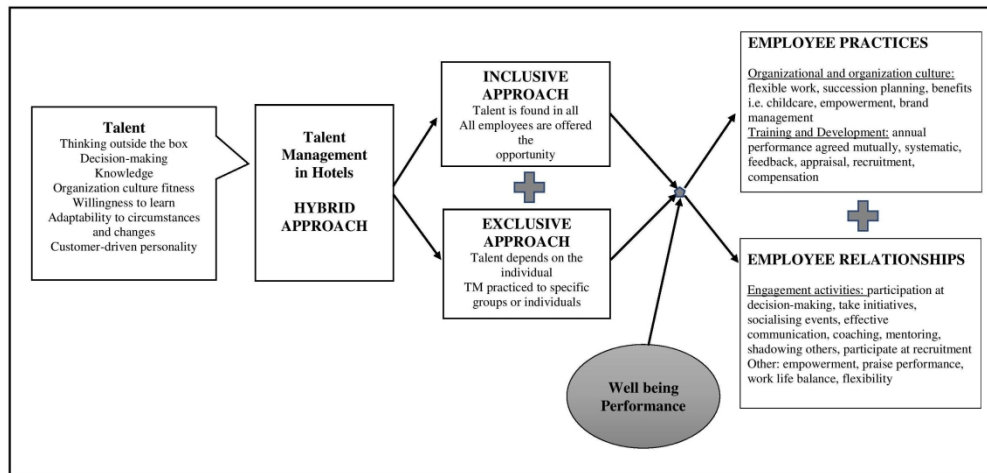


Figure 2

276x131mm (300 x 300 DPI)

Country	Hotel category	Number of employees (approx.)	Participants' Coding	Position in the hotel
Greece	4*	90	PGR1	General manager
Greece	5*	130	PGR2	General manager
Greece	5*	160	PGR3	General manager
Greece	5*	105	PGR4	General manager
Greece	4*	210	PGR22	General manager
Greece	5*	85	PGR23	Department manager
Greece	5*	75	PGR24	General manager
US	5*	220	PUS5	Director of operations
US	5*	300	PUS6	HR director
US	5*	230	PUS7	Recruitment director
US	5*	115	PUS8	General manager
US	5*	550	PUS19	General manager
US	5*	100	PUS27	Department manager
Australia	5*	110	PAU9	HR manager
Australia	5*	85	PAU10	Director of operations
Australia	5*	180	PAU11	General manager
Australia	4*	N/A	PAU12	HR director
Australia	4*	95	PAU13	General manager
Australia	5*	90	PAU18	HR director
UK	5*	65	PUK14	General manager
UK	5*	420	PUK15	General manager
UK	5*	260	PUK16	HR director
UK	5*	550	PUK17	HR director
UK	5*	95	PUK20	HR director
UK	5*	80	PUK21	General manager
UK	5*	320	PUK25	General manager
UK	5*	145	PUK26	HR director

Note: the participants' coding was conducted based on the interviews' order

Table 1

145x220mm (300 x 300 DPI)

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Author Response Form

When revising your paper, please prepare this report explaining how you have responded to each reviewer's comments and suggestions specifically.

REVIEWER A: Minor revision

Suggestions/comments from the Reviewer	Response from the Author(s)
1. I would like the authors to elaborate more how interviews were conducted and more about the questions that were asked.	Please see highlighted changes in section 3 (Methods)
2. Also, on page 8 the World Luxury citation stating the global market share is 40.5% is from 2013, since that figure is 5 years old, the citation should be updated with a more current one.	Corrected with more updated information please see added section 2.2 as well as discussion in section 3.1 p.13
3. The last paragraph addresses hospitality programs. I would prefer the authors specify what the "toolkit" for talent identification includes. And also, hospitality programs all use guest speakers and lecturers, the sentence implies they should, so the authors should change that to "continue to use....". I believe hospitality programs are doing all they can to work with industry, so unless the authors are going to really give us something we can use in the paragraph then they should just eliminate it altogether as it does not reveal any valuable information.	Taking on board the comment this section has been deleted.

REVIEWER B: Major revision

Suggestions/comments from the Reviewer	Response from the Author(s)
1. This is an interesting and topical subject and likely to be of interest to the journal readership. However, I feel that the focus of the paper could be improved in order to reveal the particular original features of the research and to better highlight the contribution. For example, little is made of the international comparisons, which might offer insights into the nuances between the geographical locations.	Discussion has been added on the geographical locations and research conducted in the four countries in terms of talent management. Since this topic is considered to be new in hospitality there are not many studies done in the industry to provide more literature. However, relevant discussion has been added throughout the paper.
2. Likewise the luxury hotel aspect, which isn't really explored in terms of the particular issues in this part of the sector. So if these such aspects were developed more fully then the paper might well make new and significant information available, but it doesn't at present.	More details on the luxury hotel sector are added in: The literature review section 2.2 (p.5) Methods (p.11)

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<p>3. There is certainly some relevant material within the literature review, though also some gaps. For example, I might have expected to see some coverage of recruitment, not in great depth, but certainly to set the context.</p>	<p>More discussion on recruitment and recruitment challenges has been added to section 2.3.1 pp.9-10</p>
<p>4. Similarly there is little on the specifics of the luxury hotel setting - even if just to comment that this hadn't been addressed in previous research - and to highlight the value of this research.</p>	<p>Please see comments in section 3, part 3.1, p13. before table 1 Some discussion is also provided in the literature review in section 2.2, p.5</p>
<p>5. There isn't anything on turnover and yet this appears in the discussion of the findings, so really it should feature in the LR.</p>	<p>Discussion on employee turnover has been added in section 2 Literature review (2.1 Employee turnover in hospitality) pp. 4-5</p>
<p>6. Overall I'd say that this section seems brief and lacking in overall content and specific detail, while the Findings seem long and lacking in contextual material.</p>	<p>This has been addressed with further discussion provided on the key literature in the section. Discussion on talent definition, on TM various approaches as well as strategies. A model is shown as per Gallardo-Gallardo et al (2013) which is then used for further discussion of findings and the development of a conceptual model.</p>
<p>7. The methodology and methods are covered in a relatively light manner, with little on the sample or comment on the comparative approach. If the findings are to be discussed in terms of comparison then there should perhaps be some discussion of the value, issues and so forth of this as an approach.</p>	<p>More details are provided not only on the data collection justification as well as the analysis part. Please see methodology section (section 3, highlighted paragraphs) for more details. Details are provided on the comparative strategy as well as the challenges and benefits of such methodology. Justification is also provided on the sample choice and the participants.</p>
<p>8. The discussion of the questions is logical, though some questions focus on aspects that haven't been covered in the LR e.g. turnover. If they are significant enough to be commented on here, then should this topic not feature earlier?</p>	<p>Discussion on employee turnover has been added in section 2 Literature review (2.1 Employee turnover in hospitality) pp. 3-4</p>
<p>9. The sample looks to be interesting, might it be worth further explanation of the role of the participants that you sought out - direct involvement in talent management or oversight? It is difficult to appreciate the findings without knowing more of the participants and their suitability.</p>	<p>Explanation has been provided in section 3.1 under table 1 p.13 Some further information on the basis for choosing the sample are also discussed in section 3, p.10-13</p>

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<p>10. This is an in depth section, perhaps too long and trying to cover too many areas? I wonder if it might be better to focus on a smaller number of points (not 6), in order to enable deeper critical discussion and reflection on the LR?</p>	<p>It is not very clear comment and the authors would appreciate some further clarification. 6 are the key groups of talent retention strategies which are now reduced to 4 as three categories were merged into 1. See discussion in section 4 p.23 The themes discussed are 3 turnover, definition of talent and TM strategies. Reflection on the LR is enhanced with additional discussion on turnover and the lack of talent definition in hospitality.</p>
<p>11. So there is a section on turnover and yet this hasn't been set up in the LR.</p>	<p>Discussion on employee turnover has been added in section 2 Literature review (2.1 Employee turnover in hospitality) pp. 4-5</p>
<p>12. There are new points being raised in the Conclusion that really haven't been discussed earlier in the paper and it would be good to see more linkage between the LR, Findings and Conclusions.</p>	<p>All have been checked and now covered in the literature review section.</p>
<p>13. If there is a clearer focus on the international comparison or more on turnover, then the paper might offer some great examples of theory and practice. It doesn't currently do that very well, but the opportunities are there.</p>	<p>Please see revised section 5</p>
<p>14. I'm not at all sure about the position or basis of the comments on involving academic institutions. While I totally agree with the sentiments, they don't seem to evolve from the paper at all and appear to be a little 'random'.</p>	<p>Taking on board the comment this section has been deleted.</p>

REVIEWER C: Minor revision

Suggestions/comments from the Reviewer	Response from the Author(s)
<p>1. The findings could be presented in the form of a framework and linked to an existing theory. As Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013), cited in the paper, strongly advocate developing theory, the authors should use their findings to build stepping stones for theory in this field.</p>	<p>This has been addressed with further discussion provided on the key literature in the section. Discussion on talent definition, on TM various approaches as well as strategies. A model is shown as per Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) which is then used for further discussion of findings as a model has been added see p.27</p>
<p>2. The sampling method is explained yet it is not clear. Convenience and snowball sampling is mentioned but there is also a hint of judgmental</p>	<p>We agree with your comment and we added the phase where judgemental sampling was implemented. Please see section 3 p. 14.</p>

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sampling.	
3. The study does not provide the source of questions. If the questions were developed by the author/s, then what method was used, literature review or qualitative research. If literature was used, then the references of those studies should be provided.	Please see highlighted section in p.15
4. The results are presented and discussed adequately by identifying three major themes. However, it might be better to summarize the results in the form of a framework or propositions	Manuscript amended as per the reviewer's comment, please see p.27.
5. The author/s have done a good job of delineating implications for practitioners but implications for theory are not sufficiently discussed.	Implications for theory are presented in 5.1 The main "new" theory-related finding is that in hospitality a hybrid model is used to accommodate all employees' potential and for TM.
6. Normally, qualitative research is theory developing as opposed to quantitative, which is mainly theory testing. The author/s need to highlight if this research can help clarify the definition of talent, the starting point for construct development, or identify dimensions of talent retention construct.	Some further discussion is provided in the literature review but mainly in conclusions were the definition of talent and the dimensions are clearly presented. This is also evident in the model as it emerged from the findings Please see p.27.
7. The author/s have not sufficiently built upon good research and findings. The author/s can also discuss how this research enhances the existing theory.	The model developed from data analysis as shown in figure 2 provides a clear overview of how Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) model applies in hospitality and more specifically in luxury hospitality.
8. The author/s can also explore if personality characteristics of highly talented employees could be related to Big Five personality traits. In addition, the author/s can look into the possibility of linking the findings to high context and low context culture since the data was collected from four countries.	Very interesting idea proposed however due to size limitations it is not feasible to tackle in addition to the discussion already provided the personality traits and the impact of culture on talent and talent management. However, it proposes a good idea as there is material to discuss these in another paper.
9. In the abstract, the author/s state that "The purpose of the paper is to provide an overview of talent management...". The word "overview" gives connotation of a literature review even though this is an empirical study.	This part in the abstract has been changed. Please see highlighted area.