

## A Measurement Model of Perceived Human Resource Practices for Hotel Employees: A Confirmatory Factor Analysis

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*Received: October 19, 2019; Revised: November 22, 2019; Accepted: December 30, 2019*

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### Abstract

This study aims to refine and validate a measurement scale of perceived HR practices from recent existing human resource management literature for hotel frontline employees (FLEs) in the context of Thailand through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Data were gathered from 320 hotel FLEs who worked at the sixteen participating hotels in Phuket. The results suggest that the identified six indicators, namely 1) selective staffing, 2) rewards, 3) empowerment, 4) training, 5) job security, and 6) career opportunity, with 21 items of hotel FLEs-perceived HR practices have empirically demonstrated solid evidence of multidimensionality, reliability ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ), and convergent validity. Furthermore, the overall modified measurement model of HR

practices has empirically yielded a good fit. Career opportunities appear to be the most vital indicator of HR practices in this context. This study contributes to the hotel industry in Thailand as the refined and validated measurement of HR practices in this study can be utilised as an evaluation tool by the hotels that wish to redesign HR policies and practices for their FLEs.

**Keywords:** Human resource practices, Hotel Industry, Hotel frontline employees,

Confirmatory factor analysis

## บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อปรับปรุงและตรวจสอบแบบวัดการรับรู้การบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรมนุษย์จากผลการณ์รวมล่าสุดที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการจัดการทรัพยากรมนุษย์ สำหรับพนักงานโรงแรมส่วนหน้าในบริบทประเทศไทย โดยใช้วิธีการวิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบเชิงยืนยัน (CFA) จากการรวมข้อมูลจากพนักงานส่วนหน้าของโรงแรมทั้งหมด 320 คน ที่ทำงานอยู่ในโรงแรมที่เข้าร่วมการศึกษาในครั้งนี้จำนวน 16 แห่งในจังหวัดภูเก็ต ผลการวิจัยชี้ให้เห็นว่า แบบวัดการรับรู้การบริหารทรัพยากรมนุษย์สำหรับพนักงานโรงแรมส่วนหน้าที่มี 6 องค์ประกอบ ได้แก่ 1) การคัดเลือกพนักงาน 2) การให้รางวัล 3) การมอบอำนาจให้กับพนักงาน 4) การฝึกอบรม 5) ความมั่นคงในหน้าที่การงาน และ 6) ความก้าวหน้าในสายอาชีพ ซึ่งประกอบไปด้วยข้อคำถามทั้งหมด 21 ข้อ เป็นเครื่องมือที่มีความเชื่อมั่นสูง (สัมประสิทธิ์แอลfaของครอนบาก = 0.91) และมีความเที่ยงตรงเหมือน (Convergent validity) นอกจากนี้ไม่เดลการวัดการรับรู้การบริหารทรัพยากรมนุษย์ของพนักงานโรงแรมที่ได้ปรับปรุงแล้วยังมีความสอดคล้องกับข้อมูลเชิงประจักษ์ ผลการวิจัยยังได้บ่งชี้ว่า องค์ประกอบด้านความก้าวหน้าในสายอาชีพ เป็นตัวบ่งชี้ที่มีความสำคัญที่สุดของการจัดการทรัพยากรมนุษย์ในบริบทที่ศึกษา ดังนั้นการศึกษาในครั้งนี้มีประโยชน์ต่ออุตสาหกรรมโรงแรมในประเทศไทยซึ่งแบบการวัดที่ปรับปรุงแล้วสามารถนำไปใช้เป็นเครื่องมือในการประเมินผลจากการบริหารทรัพยากรมนุษย์ซึ่งโรงแรมสามารถนำไปออกแบบนี้โดยและแนวทางด้านการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรมนุษย์ให้เหมาะสมกับพนักงานส่วนหน้าของโรงแรม

**คำสำคัญ :** การบริหารทรัพยากรมนุษย์ อุตสาหกรรมโรงแรม พนักงานโรงแรมส่วนหน้า การวิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบเชิงยืนยัน

## Introduction

The rapid growth of the global travel demand in the past decades has made the hotel sector become a foremost player as an integral part of the travel and tourism industry in Thailand (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2018). As of Thailand's international tourism receipts in 2016, the average tourist spending is THB 5,237.62 per person per day in which

hotels (THB 1,530) have the largest share of the expenditure followed by shopping, and food and beverages respectively (Ministry of Tourism and Sport, 2018). The hotel industry has attracted numerous Thai and international investors due to its ability to generate revenues. The hotel industry today become more competitive among the service sectors in Thailand. Hotels do not only compete with the competitors within the segment but also other types of lodging, such as Airbnb, guesthouses, as well as unregistered hotels. Thus, if hotels want to gain a competitive advantage in these competitive markets, they should invest in various human resource (HR) practices as hotels' success has significantly relied on employees to meet customer needs and demands.

The effects of varied configurations of HR practices on employee attitudes and behaviours (Kim, Kim, Choi, & Phetvaroon, 2019; Safavi & Karatepe, 2018) have drawn considerable attention over the past 30 years (Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). Good HR practices can provide employees with a decent working environment that motivates them to be part of hotel operations and achieve corporate goals (Nassar, 2017). Past studies show that HR practices are essential for every organisation in stimulating positive employees' outcomes. Such outcomes include enhancing job performance (Violetta & Heidi, 2018), work engagement (Annika, Nelson, & Ana, 2017; Presbitero, 2017), and increasing job satisfaction (Mayes, Finney, Johnson, Shen, & Yi, 2017). These consequences of HR practices are particularly vital for the hotel industry as the industry has substantially relied on its hotel staff to deliver exceptional service to exceed customer satisfaction (Ma, Qu, Wilson, & Eastman, 2013).

Numerous hotel-related research in the past studies applied different configurations of HR practices. For example, Safavi and Karatepe (2018) employed eight dimensions of HR practices, selective staffing, job security, training, empowerment, rewards, teamwork, career opportunities, and work-life balance, for the study of the hotel industry in Iran. Chen, Lyu, Li, Zhou, and Li (2017) applied five dimensions, selective staffing, "externally equitable reward systems, individually equitable reward systems", training, and performance appraisal, for the study of large hotels in China.

Although there is growing body of research on HR practices in hotel businesses, there is still no consensus on which set of HR practices is internationally generic and used to measure the perception of hotel frontline employees (FLEs) who are the centre of the hotel operations. Hotel FLEs, such as front office staff and waitress, have a high interaction with customers

(Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2011), and their performance could determine the success of the hotel businesses. Besides, those measurement model of HR practices that are reliable and validated in the past studies might generate different results in other contexts.

Based on the above reason, this paper aims to analyse the indicators of perceived HR practices from recent existing human resource management literature, and confirm a set of HR practices that fit with the context of hotel FLEs in Thailand.

### **Objective(s)**

To refine and validate a measurement scale of perceived HR practices for hotel FLEs using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

### **Definition of Operational Terms/ Research Terms**

*Human Resource Practices (HR Practices)* refers to the implementation of practices and policies that have an impact on employees' perceptions (Wright & Nishii, 2007), attitudes, behaviours, and performance (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2007). HR practices in this study include six dimensions, (1) selective staffing, (2) rewards, (3) training, (4) empowerment, (5) job security, and (6) career opportunity.

### **Literature review**

#### **Human resource Practices (HR Practices)**

Senyucel (2009) defined HR practices as "a combination of people-oriented management practices that views employees as assets, not costs; and its main aim is to create and maintain a skilful and committed workforce to gain a competitive advantage". Good HR practices include a set of practices implemented by businesses to manage staffs effectively by creating complex social interactions, creating corporate knowledge, and developing specific capabilities to maintain the competitive advantage (Minbaeva, 2005). Numerous past studies suggest that HR practices are one of the strong antecedents of employees' perceptions (Makhecha, Srinivasan, Prabhu, & Mukherji, 2016; Wright & Nishii, 2007), attitudes, behaviours, and performance (Noe et al., 2007). Table 1 presents the examples of HR practices and their consequences in past studies in the hospitality context.

**Table 1** Related research of HR practices in the hospitality industry

Author (s)/Country	Recruitment & Selection (Selective)	Pay Systems (Pay benefits, & Reward)	Training & Empowerment	Job Security	Career/Promotion Opportunity	Communication	Teamwork	Performance	Main results
Afsar, Shahjehan, and Shah (2018), Thailand	✓	✓	✓						HR practices and trust in supervisor have a significant effect on hotel FLEs' turnover through job embeddedness.
Irene, Javier, and Antonia (2018), Spain	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		HR practices, directly and indirectly, affect hotel employees' engagement.
Safavi and Karatepe (2018), Iran	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		HR practices positively affect hotel employees' career adaptability, which in turns leads to employees' higher creative performance, extra-role performance, and meets their expectations.
Nassar (2017), Egypt	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		HR practices directly affect hotel employees' affective commitment.
Vatankhah, Javid, and Raoofi (2017), Iran	✓		✓	✓					HR practices (High-performance work practices) directly affect flight attendants' perceived organisational support and are negatively related to counterproductive work behaviour.
Karatepe and Olugbade (2016), Turkey	✓			✓	✓	✓			HR practices boost hotel employees' work engagement which in turn leads to improvement in absence intentions, higher service recovery and creative performance.

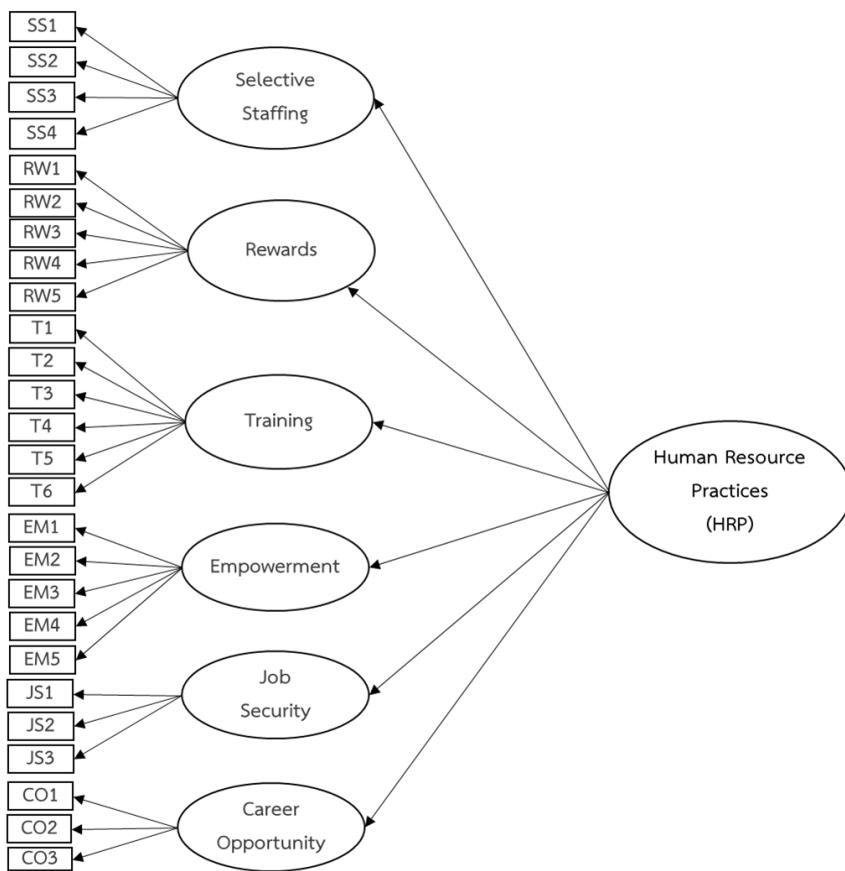
The empirical studies shown in Table 1 demonstrate that service employees, such as hotel FLEs and flight attendants, who perceive various HR practices, display a higher level of affective commitment, work engagement, and job embeddedness, which in turn lead to positive behaviours and performance. Although organisations across the globe adopt a different set of HR practices, the following standard HR practices are most

frequently used in the hospitality context to assess the employee perceptions that are likely to generate desired outcomes.

1. **Selective staffing** (recruitment and selection) refers to the staffing function, including recruitment and selection activities (Young-Thelin & Boluk, 2012).
2. **Empowerment** refers to "the freedom and ability to make decisions and commitments" (Forrester, 2000). This practice involves the management activities that transmit power to employees (Stavrinoudis & Simos, 2016).
3. **Job security** refers to employees' trust and assurance in keeping his or her job for a reasonable period (Lucky, Minai, & Rahman, 2013).
4. **Career opportunity** or promotion opportunity is defined as individual career promotion and development opportunities at the workplace (Ferreira & Mujajati, 2017).
5. **Reward** refers to a special gift or benefits, such as various incentives or a performance-based bonus, granted to recognise the accomplishment of specific results or great work.
6. **Training** refers as the systematic activities designed to develop and promote individuals' performance (Selden, 2005) by helping individuals to obtain desirable skills (e.g., customer service), mindsets, and expertise (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012).

## Conceptual Model

From the comprehensive literature review discussed in the previous section, these six HR practices, namely selective staffing (recruitment and selection), empowerment, career opportunity, rewards, training, and job security, are the most appropriate indicators of HR practices for this study. Also, the measurement scales for each latent proposed in Figure 1 is adopted from various studies discussed in the previous section.



**Figure 1** Hypothesised measurement model of HR practices

### Research methodology

This study utilised the quantitative research method aiming to refine and validate the measurement scale of HR practices that fit the hotel context in Thailand.

#### Target population and sampling

The target population was the hotel frontline employees (FLEs) from a sample of 16 participating four-star hotels operated in Phuket, one of the most popular destinations in Thailand. The stratified random sampling was employed based on the three types of hotel, independent, local chain, and international chain. A minimum of 300 hotel FLEs was randomly selected and met the minimum suggested sample size ( $N = 150$ ) for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Muthén & Muthén, 2002).

#### Survey Instrument (Measurement scales)

The questionnaire was developed from the comprehensive review of the literature concerning the hospitality industry, especially hotel and airline sectors. To refine and validate the measurement model of HR practice (HRP) for the hotel context in Thailand, this study

employed several validated scales to initiate factors portrayed in the conceptual model. Thus, a survey tool consisting of 27 items was developed in this study. Selective staffing (SLS) was measured via four items taken from Sun, Aryee, and Law (2007). Rewards (RW) was evaluated using five items adapted from Boshoff and Allen (2000). Training (T) was measured using five items obtained from Boshoff and Allen (2000). Empowerment (EM) was assessed via five items adapted from Hayes (1994). Four and three items adapted from Delery and Doty (1996) were used to measure job security (JS) and career opportunity (CO), respectively. Five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used for measuring all items reflecting hotel FLEs' perceptions of the level of HR practices exercised by the hotels.

The content validity of the survey instrument was established through a review of three experts. Then, the questionnaire was pre-tested with 30 hotel FLEs in Bangkok. Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all items ranged between 0.77 and 0.95, confirming instrument reliability.

### **Data analysis**

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was undertaken with the statistic software to refine and validate the existing measurement scales of HR practices derived from existing empirical studies. Specifically, second-order CFA was utilised as HRP in this study was conceived as a higher-order construct.

## **Results**

### **Respondent Profile**

From 320 usable questionnaires, most of the respondents (70.6 per cent) were female. Most of the respondents (72.8 per cent) were aged 21 to 39. About 44.1 per cent had a bachelor's degree, 29.4 per cent a high school or vocational diploma, 14.1 per cent an associate degree, 10.9 per cent had no high school qualification, and 1.6 per cent had a master's degree. Regarding organisational tenure, 37.8 per cent had worked for their current hotel for less than one year, 41.3 per cent one to five years, 10.3 per cent for six to ten years, and 10.6 per cent over 11 years. Majority of respondents were from front office department (36.6 per cent), followed by food and beverage department (34.4 per cent), housekeeping department (18.8 per cent), and other frontline areas (10.3 per cent).

### **Measurement model fit for HR practices**

Second-order CFA was performed to assess HRP, a higher-order factor, consisting of 6 first-order factors, selective staffing (SLS), rewards (RW), training (T), empowerment (EM), job

security (JS), and career opportunity (CO). The proposed measurement model of HRP with a total of 27 indicators was initially estimated and produced unfit results: CFI (Comparative fit index) = 0.90, RMSEA (Root mean square error of approximation) = 0.069, RMR (Standardised root mean square residual) = 0.029, and TLI (Tucker-lewis index) = 0.89. Most of the goodness of fit indices attained the minimum level, excepting TLI. Hence, to improve a model fit, six items with low factor loadings (less than 0.50) and high correlation error were removed from the measurement scale. Consequently, the re-specified measurement model of HRP with the 21 remaining indicators was rerun as demonstrated in Figure 2 resulting in a good model fit;  $\chi^2/df = 2.01$ , CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.06, RMR = 0.02, and TLI = 0.94.

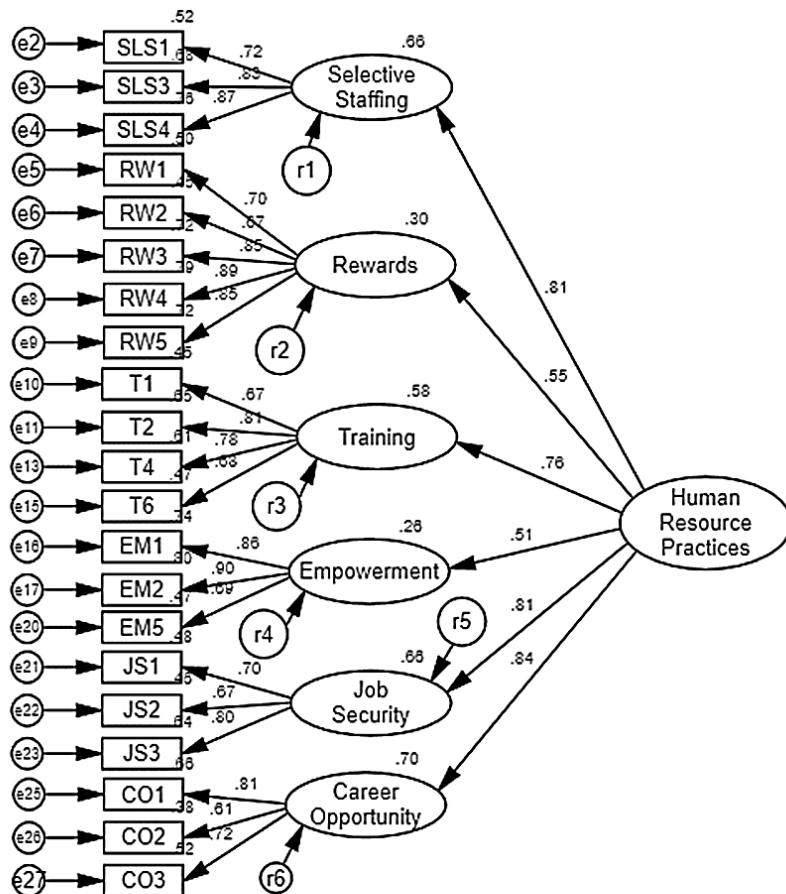
## Reliability and convergent validity

Table 2 presents the standardised factor loading and t-value ( $t$ ) of all 21 indicators loaded on their corresponding latent variables as well as the results of the construct reliability of the modified HRP measurement model. The magnitudes of the  $\beta$  weight of 21 indicators ranged between 0.61 to 0.90 exceeding the suggested level ( $> 0.50$ ). Out of 21 indicators, 14 indicators were above 0.70. In terms of the first-order latent variables loaded on HRP construct, career opportunity obtained the highest loading ( $\beta = 0.85$ ) indicating that career opportunity was the most vital indicator of HRP construct followed by job security ( $\beta = 0.81$ ), selective staffing ( $\beta = 0.81$ ), training ( $\beta = 0.76$ ), rewards ( $\beta = 0.55$ ), and empowerment ( $\beta = 0.51$ ), and all were statistically significant ( $p > 0.001$ ).

The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the modified HRP scales was 0.91 in which the alpha by each first-order construct ranged from 0.757 (career opportunity) to 0.895 (rewards) exceeding the suggested level ( $> 0.70$ ). The composite reliability or construct reliability (CR) by each first-order construct were from 0.76 (career opportunity) to 0.90 (rewards) with the overall CR of 0.88 for HRP construct exceeding a cut-off value of 0.70. Further, the average variance extracted (AVE) of all first-order latent variables (SLS = 0.65, RW = 0.64, T = 0.55, EM = 0.67, JS = 0.53, CO = 0.52) and second order HRP construct (0.55) were greater than the acceptable thresholds of 0.50.

The above findings of model fit indices, significant factor loadings, reliability coefficient, AVEs, and CR, confirmed the convergent validity for the HRP scales (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). Thus, the 21 measurement items loaded on their respective

latent factors (3 items on SLS, 5 items on RW, 4 items on T, 3 items on EM, 3 items on JS, and 3 items on CO) for the final HRP model were reliable and adequate.



$$\chi^2/df = 2.01, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.06, RMR = 0.02, \text{ and } TLI = 0.94$$

**Figure 2** Modified measurement scales of HR practices for hotel frontline employees in Thailand

**Table 2** Reliability and convergent validity results of CFA for HRP model

Construct/ Indicators	Factor Loading ( <i>B</i> )	t-value	CR	AVE
<b>Human Resources Practices (HRP) (<math>\alpha = 0.91</math>)</b>			<b>0.88</b>	<b>0.55</b>
<i>Selective Staffing (SLS) (<math>\alpha = 0.846</math>)</i>				
SLS1 Select the right person	0.72	14.185		
SLS3 Staffing process	0.83	16.727		
SLS4 Extensive efforts in the selection	0.87	-		
<i>Rewards, I am awarded.... (<math>\alpha = 0.895</math>)</i>				
RW1 if I improve the level of service	0.70	14.172		
RW2 based on customer evaluations of service	0.67	13.351		
RW3 for serving customers well	0.85	18.792		
RW4 for dealing effectively with customer problems	0.89	19.993		
RW5 for satisfying complaining customers	0.85	-		
<i>Training (<math>\alpha = 0.824</math>)</i>				
T1 Continued training	0.67	11.687		
T2 Extensive customer service training	0.81	14.009		
T4 Deal with complaining customers	0.78	-		
T6 T&D that improve my performance	0.69	11.898		
<i>Empowerment (<math>\alpha = 0.852</math>)</i>				
EM1 empowered to solve customer problems.	0.86	13.363		
EM2 encouraged to handle customer problems by myself	0.90	13.454		
EM5 I have control over how I solve customer problems.	0.67	-		
<i>Job Security (<math>\alpha = 0.762</math>)</i>				
JS1 Employees can expect to stay in the hotel for as long as they wish.	0.70	11.456		
JS2 It is tough to dismiss employees in this organisation.	0.68	11.141		
JS3 Job security is almost guaranteed to employees in this hotel.	0.80	-		
<i>Career Opportunity (<math>\alpha = 0.757</math>)</i>				
CO1 Clear career paths in this hotel	0.82	-		
CO2 Promotion opportunity for FLEs	0.61	10.350		
CO3 The supervisor knows career aspirations	0.72	12.165		

**Note:** all items are significant at  $p > 0.001$ , the path of RW, SLS4, RW5, T4, EM5, JS3, and CO1, was fixed to 1 (not estimated). CR = construct reliability or composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted.

## Conclusion & Discussion

This study has sought to refine and validate the measurement model/scale of perceived HR practices for hotel frontline employees (FLEs) in the context of Thailand through CFA. From a comprehensive literature review, the current study has identified six vital indicators of HR practices with 27 items. The results from CFA suggest that all the six factors with 21 items of

hotel FLEs-perceived HR practices have empirically demonstrated substantial evidence of multidimensionality, reliability, and convergent validity. Consistent with the previous studies (Karatepe & Vatankhah, 2015; Safavi & Karatepe, 2018), empirical results suggest that these six indicators are valid across different types of hotels (independent, international chain, and local chain) in a beach destination.

Career opportunities seem to be the most meaningful indicator of HR practices, followed by job security, selective staffing, training, rewards, and empowerment. This hotel frontline employees who perceive a higher level of career opportunities and job securities, and selectively hired, are likely to display attitudes and behaviours that benefit their respective organisation. The current study has broader our understanding of hotel frontline employees' perception towards various types of HR practices as numerous past studies frequently adopted only training, rewards, and empowerments, as the measurement of HR practices. In contrary to those studies (Afsar et al., 2018; Safavi & Karatepe, 2018), rewards and empowerments have obtained the lowest factor loadings indicating the least vital indicators of HR practices in this context. The plausible reason is that performance-based rewards and empowering employees might not be commonly exercised by the hotels in beach destination like Phuket.

Numerous studies (Fajar & Soeling, 2017; Nadeem, Riaz, & Danish, 2019) suggest that good HR practices can enhance employees' positive behaviours, such citizenship behaviours, and job performance. Hotel frontline employees (FLEs) who are selectively recruited, performance-based rewarded, extensively trained, empowered, and perceived high job security and career opportunity, are motivated to perform beyond their tasks voluntarily and behave more positively that is beneficial to their hotels, co-workers, and customers. For example, according to Suan and Nasurdin (2014), when employees receive good training, they can perform their tasks more efficiently and have extra time and energy to engage more in displaying those extra-role behaviours (OCB). Thus, through effective training practices, these frontline employees are encouraged to develop into more competent in going beyond their job descriptions (OCB), such as “helping their colleagues with heavy workloads” and enthusiastically promoting hotels' services and products.

## Recommendations

### Implication for practice

The findings in this study suggest that hotels should simultaneously employ and invest in these HR practices to foster hotel frontline employees' skills, knowledge, and abilities to gain a competitive advantage. These six indicators appear to be more prevalent and significant for hotel frontline employees and hotel industry. Hence, hotels should deploy this measurement of HR practices as a uniform survey tool to measure the levels of hotel frontline employee perceived HR practices to gain more meaningful information that reflects the quality of its actual HR practices. This survey tool will help hotels to detect an issue and redesign effective HR policies and practices that are appropriate for hotel frontline employees.

### Future Research

The current study selected six critical indicators, selective staffing, rewards, training, empowerment, job security, and career opportunity, frequently used for high-performance work practices in the service sector. Future studies may incorporate other possible useful indicators for HR practices such as performance appraisal, teamwork, job design, information sharing and quality of work-life balance. The incorporation of those indicators in the measurement of HR practices may further extend the understanding of other aspects of perceived HR practices of hotel frontline employees.

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