

Influence of Human Capital Development on Hotel Businesses' Competitive Advantage and Operational Success in the Upper Northern Region's Secondary Cities

อิทธิพลของการพัฒนาทุนมนุษย์ต่อความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขันและความสำเร็จในการดำเนินงานของธุรกิจโรงแรมในเมืองรองเขตภาคเหนือตอนบน

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Abstract

The research aimed to investigate the influence of human capital development on hotel businesses' competitive advantage and operational success. The sample was 269 hotel businesses in the upper northern region's secondary cities. The tool used for collecting data was a questionnaire. The results found that human capital development had a positive, direct influence on their competitive advantage and operational success and a positive, indirect influence on their operational success through competitive advantage. In contrast, the competitive advantage had a positive, direct influence on their operational success. The results confirm that human capital development was a critical affected factor in the hotel business's competitive advantage and operational success.

Keywords: Human Capital Development, Competitive Advantage, Operational Success, Hotel Business, The Upper Northern Region's Secondary Cities

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตรวจสอบอิทธิพลของการพัฒนาทุนมนุษย์ต่อความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขันและความสำเร็จในการดำเนินงานของธุรกิจโรงแรม กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นธุรกิจโรงแรม 269 แห่งในเมืองรองของเขตภาคเหนือตอนบน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลเป็นแบบสอบถาม ผลการวิจัยพบว่าการพัฒนาทุนมนุษย์มีอิทธิพลทางตรงเชิงบวกต่อความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขันและความสำเร็จในการ

ดำเนินงาน และมีอิทธิพลทางอ้อมเชิงบวกต่อความสำเร็จในการดำเนินงานผ่านความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขัน ในขณะที่ความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขันมีอิทธิพลทางตรงเชิงบวกต่อความสำเร็จในการดำเนินงาน ผลการวิจัยยืนยันว่า การพัฒนาทุนมนุษย์เป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่ส่งผลต่อความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขันและความสำเร็จในการดำเนินงานของธุรกิจโรงแรม

คำสำคัญ : การพัฒนาทุนมนุษย์ ความได้เปรียบในการแข่งขัน ความสำเร็จในการดำเนินงาน ธุรกิจโรงแรม เมืองรองเขตภาคเหนือตอนบน

Introduction

Human capital development is at the heart of modern organization management. It aims to develop human resource potential by wisdom-based to create organizational innovation, value-added, and growth to achieve sustainable development. An organization with high-performance human capital will have a sustainable competitive advantage because it can create intellectual capital and innovation (Chiang and Shih, 2011; Soraya and Chew, 2010). Therefore, entrepreneurs must acquire knowledge about human capital development to create a correct and fast competitive advantage to respond to problems or opportunities to survive and advance the organization in the current changing circumstances.

Human capital development is an evolution of human resource management with the concept that human resources have been an asset that can value-added. (Decharin, 2005). Therefore, organizations must develop personnel potential by enhancing their knowledge, abilities, skills, expertise, and experience necessary to perform the assigned work. It enables personnel to perform their work with confidence, success, and progress in work which benefits the organization in more efficient operations (Chueabangkaew, 2008).

Currently, the tourism and hotel sector is a highly competitive environment due to the declining tourist numbers. Most of the tourism is still in major cities such as Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket. However, the government has promoted tourism expansion to secondary cities to increase revenues from the tourism sector and expand revenues to locals. (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2019). Tourism in the north region's secondary cities is one of the tourists' interests because it has unique culture and nature, ethnically diverse, has historical and ecological world heritage sites, and is a gateway to connect tourism to neighboring countries. It saw from a growth rate in tourism income that increased in secondary cities such as Nan, Phichit, Lamphun, Uthai Thani, Uttaradit, Nakhon

Sawan, Kamphaeng Phet, Phayao, Lampang (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2019). With the increasingly diverse tourist needs and competition from competitors in the tourism market, secondary cities' entrepreneurs try their best to reach the tourism market, such as unique accommodation creation to suit tourists' needs and interests to attract more tourists.

Therefore, the hotel business in the secondary cities needs to develop the potential of human capital to increase the competitiveness of the business to support the growth of the tourism industry in the secondary cities of the northern region. This study seeks to confirm human capital development's influence on hotel businesses' competitive advantage and operational success in the upper northern region's secondary cities. Information or findings obtained can be used as guidelines for hotel business's performance development to increase growth and operational success in the future. It will benefit their businesses and the country's overall economy.

Research Objective

To investigate the influence of human capital development on hotel businesses' competitive advantage and operational success in the upper northern region's secondary cities.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Human Capital Development

Human capital development is developing elements in an organization's human resources, namely knowledge, competence, skills, experience, and expertise (Thepwan, 2011). Organizations with potential human capital can create a competitive advantage and make successful and surviving in any situation (Armstrong 2007; Kongkasawat, 2007). Human capital development was effectively the human capital recruitment and development in skills, knowledge, capabilities, and employee maintenance to achieve value and high returns and create an advantage for organizations (Chidi & Shadare, 2011). Empirical evidence from previous studies such as research's Matchuang (2014), Lalitsasivimol (2016), and Sangsuwan et al. (2013) shown that human capital development had a positive, direct influence on businesses' competitive advantage and operational success. Human capital development's elements (Armstrong 2007; Na Takuathung, 2007) include 1) individual

learning, 2) organizational learning orientation, 3) vision creation, 4) emotional intelligence development, and 5) strategic capability. All five features were defined as five observed variables that were indicators of the human capital development latent variable (HUC) in the study, including individual learning (HUC1), organizational learning orientation (HUC2), vision creation (HUC4), and strategic capability (HUC5). From the study of related literature mentioned above, hypotheses 1 and 2 are assumed as follows.

H1: Human capital development had a positive, direct influence on competitive advantage.

H2: Human capital development had a positive, direct influence on operational success.

Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is developing and discovering organizational resources that competitors do not have or do something that competitors cannot do as core or distinctive competencies. This will create a competitive advantage and customer satisfaction. Such advantage is an essential ingredient to the organization's success and long-term survival that other organizations do not or cannot be compared (Nontanathorn, 2010; Naveekarn, 2005; Robbins, 2005; Sa-nguanwongwan, 2010; Sirinirand and Saichu (2009). A study of documents and previous research concluded that organizational competitive advantage features result in organizational success, four areas measure it (Danthamrongkul, 2006; Matchuang, 2014): 1) efficiency, 2) quality, 3) innovation, and 4) customer responsiveness. All four features were defined as five observed variables that were indicators of the competitive advantage latent variable (CPT) in the study, including efficiency (CPT1), quality (CPT2), innovation (CPT3), and customer responsiveness (CPT4). From the study of related literature mentioned above, hypothesis 3 is assumed as follows.

H3: Competitive advantage had a positive, direct influence on operational success.

Operational Success

Operational success refers to the group of people working together to achieve the goal together effectively, meet customer needs or service recipients, and create satisfaction for organizational personnel. Traditional business success measurement systems focus primarily on financial views that tell a story of past events. It is suitable for the age of industrial business, investing in long-term production capacity and customer relationships,

which is not an important point that leads to success in the technology era (Thongyot, 2006). Today, the business operational success measurement reflects actual performance, emphasizing organizational goals indicating its state and what will happen to it in the future. The Balanced Scorecard (BSC), based on Kaplan and Norton's (1992) concept, is used in current business organizations to measure operational success, focusing on achieving a balance, reflecting actual performance. BSC is operated by defining an organization's key performance indicators (KPIs) in a strategic plan to create a consistent understanding of organizational personnel about achieving the goals set (Decharin, 2005). The key performance indicators (KPIs) are four perspectives:

1. Financial perspective is a measure of a profitable entity's performance that will indicate whether the business is successful or not. It covers four indicators: 1) revenue growth, 2) cost reduction, 3) productivity improvement) and 4) asset utilization.

2. Customer perspective is to offer value to customers with variety. It covers five indicators: 1) market share, 2) customer retention, 3) customer acquisition, 4) customer satisfaction, and 5) customer profitability.

3. Internal process perspective is a measurement related to organizational work process, improvement, and development. It covers three indicators: 1) efficiency, 2) quality, and 3) innovation.

4. Learning and growth perspective is a measure of results from measuring personnel's satisfaction, including personnel retention and personnel productivity in the organization. It covers three indicators: 1) human resource development, 2) facility and equipment development, and 3) working environment development.

All four perspectives were defined as five observed variables that were indicators of the operational success latent variable (SUC) in the study, including financial (SUC1), customer (SUC2), internal process (SUC3), and learning and growth (SUC4).

Conceptual Research Framework

The literature review related to this study consists of concepts, theories, and related research was used to determine the conceptual research framework, as shown in Figure 1.

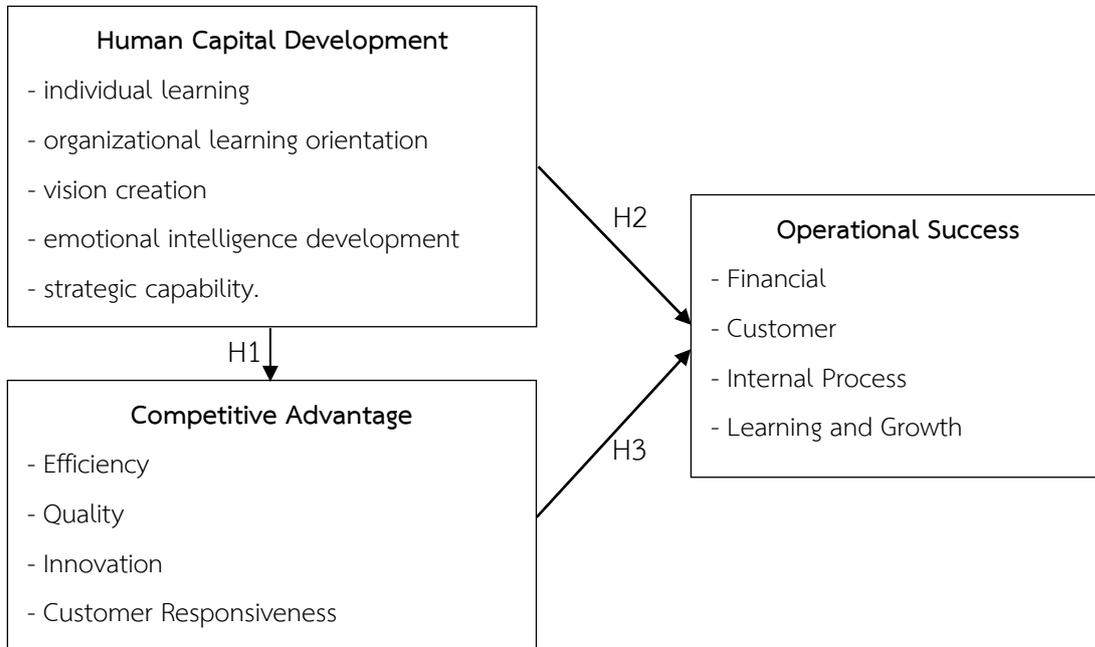


Figure 1 Conceptual Research Framework

Research Methods

Population and Sample Selection Procedure

The study population was 897 hotel businesses in the upper northern region's secondary cities, seven provinces, including Chiang Rai, Lamphun, Mae Hong Son, Lampang, Phrae, Nan, Phayao (Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2019). According to each province population, two hundred sixty-nine hotel businesses were used in the study, which was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling criteria at a 95% confidence level and selected by purposive sampling. Hotel business owner or manager was the key informants in the study.

Tool Quality Validation and Data Collection

The tool used for collecting data was a questionnaire researcher-developed. The questionnaire is divided into five parts, including Part 1-7 items to collect general information of respondents (checklist items), Part 2-20 items to collect human capital development, Part 3-20 items to collect competitive advantage, Part 4-20 items to collect operational

success and Part 5 recommendations of entrepreneurs (open-ended questions). The items in sections 2-4 are of using a 5-point Likert scale. IOC analysis was used to validate the questionnaire's content validity by three experts. IOC values of all questionnaire questions were .60. ($IOC > .60$) (Hambleton, 1984). The questionnaire was then tried out to determine the reliability using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient method. The reliability of all questionnaire questions was .95 ($\alpha > .80$) (Cronbach, 1951). Questionnaires were sent to 269 hotel businesses that were a sample and an additional 14 hotel businesses in the study population to prevent errors from incomplete questionnaires. The researcher contacted informants by telephone in advance to request an appointment to collect information during April-June 2020.

Data analysis

Respondents' General Information was analyzed by Percentage and Frequency. The variables' relationship was analyzed using Pearson's correlation analysis. Influence analysis to test hypotheses using structural equation modeling (SEM). The model-fit criteria for determining the consistency of proposed model with empirical data were: (1) chi-square probability level ($p > .05$) (2) relative chi-square ($\chi^2/df < 2$) (3) goodness of fit index ($GFI > .90$) (4) root mean square error of approximation ($RMSEA < .08$) (Kline, 2005; Schumacker and Lomax, 2010).

Results

General information of respondents

There are 269 participants; most of them were male (61.33%), aged between 31-40 years (47.21%), graduated with a bachelor's degree (70.26%), and were a business manager (92.93 %)

The Majority of their hotel businesses have a room only (48.33%), rooms less than 50 (63.94%), a period of business operations between 5-10 years (50.19%), and employees not more than 40 persons (92.19%). Most of their hotel locations were in Chiang Rai, followed by Mae Hong Son, Nan, Phrae, Phayao, Lamphun, and Lampang. Descriptive statistics of their hotel businesses

The Variables' Relationship Analysis

Data in Table 1 show that human capital development, competitive advantage, and operational success were related, statistically significant at the .01 level ($p < .01$). The correlation coefficients were as follows: Human capital development (HUC) had related to

competitive advantage (CPT) and operational success (SUC), with correlation coefficients of .703 and .615. Competitive advantage (CPT) had related to operational success (SUC), with a correlation coefficient of .777. The correlation analysis results showed that all variables were related in the same direction. Therefore, information can be analyzed for influence analysis.

Table 1 Relationship between Human Capital Development, Competitive Advantage, and operational success

Variables	\bar{x}	SD	HUC	CPT	SUC
Human Capital Development (HUC)	4.40	.36	1	.703**	.615**
Competitive Advantage (CPT)	4.38	.36		1	.777**
Operational Success (SUC)	4.35	.36			1

** Statistically significant at the .01 level ($p < .01$).

Structural Equation Modeling Analysis to Test Hypotheses

The results showed that the developed hypothesis model was consistent with the empirical data after the model was adjusted. The data-model fit indices, the chi-square (χ^2) equal to 21.761, degrees of freedom (df) equal to 30, the probability value (p) equal to .864, the relative chi-square (χ^2/df) equal to .724, the goodness of fit index (GFI) equal to .988, and the error (root mean square error of approximation ($RMSEA$) equal to .000. Statistics and more details were shown in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Table 2 Shows the Data-Model Fit Indices Obtained from the Consistency Analysis of a Proposed Model with Empirical Data Compared with Criteria.

Data-Model Fit Indices	Criteria	Results
1) Chi-square probability level: p	$p > .05$.864
2) Relative chi-square: χ^2/df	< 2	.724
3) Goodness of fit Index: GFI	$> .90$.988
4) Root mean square error of approximation: $RMSEA$	$< .08$.000

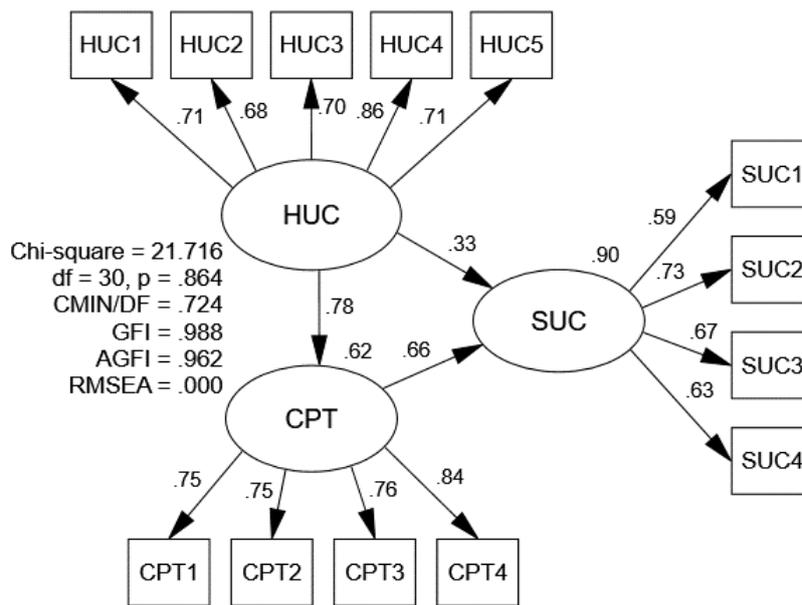


Figure 2 Consistency Statistics of The Proposed model with Empirical Data

Data in Figure 1 show that the operational success prediction coefficient was .90 ($R^2 = .90$), indicating that human capital development and competitive advantage can jointly predict 90% of their operational success. The variables' influence was summarized as follows. Human capital development had a positive, direct influence on operational success and competitive advantage, with path coefficients of 0.33 and 0.78 and a positive, indirect influence on operational success through competitive advantage, with a path coefficient of .51. Competitive advantage had a positive, direct influence on operational success, with a path coefficient of 0.66.

The factor loading of all 13 observed variables is an indicator of 3 latent variables in the model: Human capital development (HUC) is composed of 5 indicators, which are individual learning (HUC1), organizational learning orientation (HUC2), vision creation (HUC3), emotional intelligence development (HUC4), and strategic capability (HUC5), by having the standardized factor loadings equal to .71, .68, .70, .86 and .71. Competitive advantage (CPT) is composed of 4 indicators, which are efficiency (CPT1), quality (CPT2), innovation (CPT3), and customer responsiveness (CPT4), by having the standardized factor loadings equal to .75, .75, .76, and .84. Operational success (SUC) is composed of 4 indicators, which are financial (SUC1), customers (SUC2), internal process (SUC3), and learning and growth (SUC4),

by having the standardized factor loadings equal to .59, .74, .67, and .63. All indicators were statistically significant of .01. More statistics were as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Indicators' Factor Loadings, CR, and AVE

Indicators	\bar{x}	SD	factor loadings		t	R ²	CR	AVE
			b(SE)	β				
HUC	4.40	.36					.852	.538
HUC1	4.43	.41	.930(.087)	.705	10.718**	.498		
HUC2	4.41	.42	.926(.087)	.675	10.660**	.456		
HUC3	4.38	.46	1.049(.108)	.697	9.742**	.486		
HUC4	4.41	.47	1.323(.109)	.863	12.132**	.745		
HUC5	4.38	.43	1.000	.712	Scaling	.507		
CPT	4.38	.36					.857	.601
CPT1	4.38	.45	.950(.084)	.747	11.282**	.558		
CPT2	4.38	.45	.954(.090)	.754	10.604**	.569		
CPT3	4.34	.45	.964(.083)	.761	11.597**	.579		
CPT4	4.43	.42	1.000(.084)	.838	Scaling	.703		
SUC	4.35	.36					.751	.531
SUC1	4.28	.49	1.000	.593	Scaling	.352		
SUC2	4.38	.51	1.298(.145)	.725	8.927**	.526		
SUC3	4.37	.44	1.016(.120)	.667	8.504**	.444		
SUC4	4.37	.42	.921(.122)	.635	7.563**	.403		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Construct reliability was conducted by internal consistency reliability test, including the composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were considered to evaluate internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. As illustrated in Table 5, all items' CR reached the minimum threshold of .70, ranging from .751 to .857, and all items' AVE values were more significant than the minimum threshold of .50, ranging from .531 to .601 (Hair et al., 2014). These CR and AVE values indicated that all indicators were represented the latent constructs with validity and reliability.

Data in Table 4 show that human capital development had a positive, direct influence on competitive advantage and operational success, with path coefficients of .78

($\beta=.78$, $t\text{-value}=10.496$) and $.33$ ($\beta=.33$, $t\text{-value}=2.715$), supported hypothesis 1 (H1) and hypothesis 2 (H2) at the statistical significance level $<.01$ ($p <.01$). Competitive advantage had a positive, direct influence on operational success, with a path coefficient of $.66$ ($\beta=.66$, $t\text{-value}=4.455$), supported hypothesis 3 (H3) at the statistical significance level $<.01$ ($p <.01$).

Table 4 Shows the Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	path coefficient (β)	t-value	SE	Results
H1: HUC \rightarrow CPT	.78**	10.496	.084	Supported
H2: HUC \rightarrow SUC	.33**	2.715	.112	Supported
H3: CPT \rightarrow SUC	.66**	4.455	.112	Supported

** Statistically significant at the .01 level ($p <.01$).

Conclusion and Discussion

The results show that human capital development influenced hotel businesses' competitive advantage and operational success. The hotel businesses should pay attention to human capital development factors to create competitive advantage and operational success. This will enhance hotel business operators' potential to compete sustainably and be discussed as follows.

Human capital development influenced competitive advantage and operational success because it is an essential factor that leads to a good performance of personnel for creating a high organizational performance and a sustained competitive advantage that will lead to its success in the long run. Therefore, personnel training should be provided as needed and aligned with the organizational vision, strategy, goals, and personnel competence to build organizational capacity. It focuses on creating an environment that encourages personnel to learn and develop intellectual capital (Armstrong, 2007; Na Takuathung, 2007). Besides, Continuous measuring of personnel and operations' performance will improve operational efficiency and help organizations be successful (Vodak, 2010). Ericson and McCall (2012) studied intellectual capital to improve operational efficiency in the hospitality industry, focusing on knowledge management to develop intellectual capital systematically, found that it can result in an effective and efficient performance. Organizations that have personnel equipped with intellectual capital, including knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes to work, will result in the

organization's efficient operation and higher profits that are the primary goal of operational success. Competitive advantage influenced operational success because it is necessary for its success and long-term survival (Nontanathorn, 2010; Naveekarn, 2005; Sa-nguanwongwan, 2010; Robbins, 2005). Competitive advantage can be seen in having superior quality products and services, creating customer satisfaction, accepting change and flexibility at any time, and characterizing differentiation by studying both internal and external environments to create as many strengths and opportunities as possible (Sirinirand & Saichu, 2009). These will make organizations or businesses successful in the long run. In line with Matchuang's (2014) research, business executives who emphasized human capital management, both in attitude management, knowledge management, and skills management, determined as a strategy to drive personnel to work with their full knowledge and capabilities. It results in their organizations achieving the goals set, and human resource development through training to increase capacity and potential correctly and appropriately will lead to quality performance in the future.

Therefore, organizational operation improvement in human capital development and competitive advantage creation will get the best results and profitability while resources must be minimized. The important thing is that the organization has personnel with operational potential, which is the key to bringing the organization's strategy into action that responds effectively to the changing environment. It results in organizational operation success, both in financial, customers, internal process, and learning and development. In line with Kongkasawat's (2007) concept, human capital development will enable the organization to achieve its goals, create a competitive advantage, and make the organization successful and survive in every situation. Organizations with human capital potential will results in organizations' good performance because quality human capital will use its potential or capabilities effectively to cope with the fierce competition in today's environment and can propel organizations towards their defined goals.

Recommendations

The results indicated that human capital development affected businesses' human competitive advantage and operational success with significance. Therefore, for the continued success of their hotel business operation, they should develop consistent with the findings reported in this article by having suggestions as follows.

1. Hotel business entrepreneurs should develop human capital in all areas, including individual learning, organizational learning orientation, vision creation, emotional intelligence development, and strategic capability to empower them to be ready to cope with changes and lead to good performance.

2. Hotel business entrepreneurs should cooperate with government agencies and other private sectors involved in hotel business operations and higher education institutions in the province to increase the organization's personnel knowledge, skills, and abilities to gain a competitive advantage. It will benefit the efficient and effective business operation and will benefit the country's overall economy.

3. Hotel business entrepreneurs should exchange and learn with other successful hotel business entrepreneurs to bring experience in human capital development and other fields of each business to adapt and develop their own business

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