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Original Research Article

Succession Planning and Competitive Advantage of Hotels in Rivers State

AZUMARA, Emmanuel Chukwuemeka[1]*, OGOLO, John (PhD)[1], CHIKWE, John Emenike (PhD)[1]
[1]Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

***Corresponding Author**
AZUMARA, Emmanuel Chukwuemeka
Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between succession planning and competitive advantage in hotel within Rivers State, Nigeria. Succession planning, a strategic human resource management function, is pivotal in achieving these objectives. The study is motivated by the recognition that the region, despite its economic potential, faces challenges in human capital development and leadership transition. Consequently, there is a need to understand how effective succession planning can be leveraged to mitigate these challenges and foster sustainable competitive advantage. The cross-sectional survey method was adopted and a quantitatively structured questionnaire was distributed to 205 and 185 successfully retrieved. We generated descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, and tested the hypothesised relationships using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the aid of AMOS 23.0. The findings reveal a positive and significant relationship between the dimensions of succession planning (career development, and talent retention) and the measures of competitive advantage (differentiation). The study concludes that succession planning significantly relates with competitive advantage of hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria. This research contributes to the body of knowledge on human resource management and strategic management in the hospitality industry. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for hotel owners, managers, and policymakers in the South-South region to develop and implement effective succession plans that drive organisational performance and competitiveness.

Keywords: Succession Planning, Career Development, Talent Retention, Competitive Advantage, Differentiation.

INTRODUCTION

Competitive advantage refers to the ways that a company can produce goods or deliver services better than its competitors deliver. It allows a company to achieve superior margins and generate value for the company and its shareholders.

Porter (1980 cited in Douglas, Douglas, Davies, Ross, Ross, & Cross, 2010) in their study on differentiation for competitive advantage in a small family business proposed differentiation and cost leadership as measures of competitive advantage. Differentiation is how a company or a brand sets its products or services apart from its competitors. It is based on what customer's value and perceive as superior or unique, such as functionality, pricing, customer service, or marketing. The goal of competitive differentiation is to attract and acquire long-term customers by clearly articulating the benefits and distinctions of an offering. Competitive differentiation may depend on the organization's competitive advantages that are difficult to match by others (Gebauer, Gustafsson, & Witell, 2011).

On the other hand, succession planning is a process of identifying, assessing and developing high-potential employees to ensure that they will be ready to assume important managerial and executive roles when they are called upon (Sakmaneevongsa, cited in Akani, 2015). Replacing high profile managers is not a straight forward process, organization need an effective and structured succession plan to identify and train high potential employees, grooming and cultivating high potential employees require a training and development plan that can be focused on the strength and weakness of each selected employee.

Adias and Akenbor (2020), Akani (2015) in their research on succession planning and organizational survival suggested career development, talent retention and mentoring as dimensions of succession planning. Career development is the process of training and educating employees to become good managers and monitoring the progress of their managerial skills over time. It is increasingly being used as a tool to accomplish organizational objectives (William, Malos & Palmer, 2002). Mullins (1999) asserts that a more general interpretation views management development as an integral part of the process of organizational development. Creelman (2004), sees talent management as the process of inviting, attracting, engaging and retaining talented personnel. However, talent retention is all about the various means by which organization brings in employee, retains and develops them.

Furthermore, it can be seen that even though organizations have got so many employees, there are some that are regarded as talented employees. Talent management is concerned with staffing, identification of skills and abilities, retention, supervision and management, development of employees to increase performance. Thus, talent retention as a wider concept focuses on how best an organization can entice, preserve, attract, improve, manage, retain and maintain necessary talent (D' Annunzio-Green, 2008).

Tamunomiebi (2018) evaluated the moderating role of organizational culture on the relationship between ethical managerial practices and organizational resilience in Tertiary Health Institutions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria; Erkutlu (2011) examined the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between citizenship behaviour and justice perceptions in Turkey. From the studies above and literatures reviewed, the study discovered that there is paucity of literature as regards the relationship between succession planning and competitive advantage using career development and talent retention as dimensions of succession planning and differentiation as measure of competitive advantage in hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Today's business environment is characterized as highly dynamic and fiercely competitive (Dreyer & Gronhaug, 2004; Slater & Olson, 2002). Faced with limited resources, organizations must therefore strategically implement only those activities that will render competitive advantage and drive performance. Hotels represent an important part of developed and developing economies of the world. They are recognized as a pivot on which economic growth, job creation, poverty reduction and industrial development can be built (Obokoh, 2008; Okpara, 2011; Terungwa, 2012).

One of the many challenges of organizations is the improvement of organizational performance in different aspects. Global competition has increased during recent decades and firms are always trying to improve their market share, to increase profits and achieve a competitive advantage over rivals (Zahra & Garvis, 2000). Nowadays, the ability of organizations to compete in the global economy is changing rapidly and depends on the quality of products and services they offer. Moreover, they are trying to use their resources effectively and then connect with other organizations and different sections of society in order to obtain an acceptable organizational performance (Ogueze, Amah, & Olori, 2017).

With respects to the identified gaps and the various multitude of problems identified regarding hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria, this study sought to determine the relationship effect of succession planning on competitive advantage of hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to ascertain the relationship between succession planning and competitive advantage in hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Evaluate the relationship between career development and differentiation in hotels in South-South, Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the relationship between talent retention and differentiation in hotels in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to be tested as tentative answers to the research questions.

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between career development and differentiation in hotels in South-South, Nigeria.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between talent retention and differentiation in hotels in South-South, Nigeria

Succession Planning

Succession planning in small-scale business is associated with the transfer of ownership and management to the next generation. This has been found to contribute to firm growth, survival and to organizational success in general (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2006). Ellis and Ibrahim (2006) noted that succession planning is important to an effective succession of small businesses. The practice of succession planning includes the quality of the successor, the gradual transfer of power and leadership to the next generation as well as the participation of family and non-family members in the succession process are critical to an effective succession process and to the continuity and survival of the small scale businesses from generation to generation (Ellis & Ibrahim, 2006).

However, (Kellermanns & Eddleston (2006) cited lack of succession planning as a major cause of the high mortality rate in small scale businesses and noted that succession planning does not take place in smallest scale businesses. It is against this background that this study was conducted to determine the influence of labour training on longevity of small-scale businesses in Makurdi Metropolis.

Career Development

Mullins and Aldrich (1998) defined management development as the foundation of organizational effectiveness. This applies to both governments owned institutions and that of the private. Development refers to equipping the employee for anticipated changes in the job, or for expected future appointment. Management development has to do with training. William, James and Susan (2002) views the subject matter as a system that builds employees into becoming good managers and monitor their growth in managerial skills over a period of time. Strategic business owners have adopted it as a tool to implement business set goals. According the aforementioned persons, management training guidelines includes the following: On – the – job Training: Here, a senior manager encourages a lower – level manager by teaching them the requisite skills, advice, and criticisms that are needful.

Amah (2010) argues that when appointing top management level employee for example, the director, it should be considered appropriate to employ more sophisticated parameters to ensure that those to be appointed demonstrates managerial ability and general group effectiveness. Stamp (2000) argues that "in a climate in which managers are expected to use their judgment and trust their intuition, and encourage others to do the same, management development must include concepts such as learning to learn, listening, being a team member, influencing others, communication and individual understanding of growth capability organizations need creative people who can act on their own initiative whether in serving customers or in making products because the survival of an organization depends on its ability to be flexible and adaptive in a highly competitive environment". It is very important to note that the development of executives in any given organization is the development of the organization.

Talent Retention

Talent management is not a fancy word of identifying and developing employees. It is an act whereby an organization sets aside certain factors to attract, retain and develop employees and direct their abilities in performing activities that are useful to the organization. Schweyer (2004), see talent retention as attracting, identifying, recruiting, developing, motivating, promoting and retaining people that have a strong potential to succeed within an organization. In addition, Creelman (2004) sees talent retention as the process of inviting, attracting, engaging and retaining talented personnel. However, talent retention is all about the various means by which organization brings in employee, retains and develops them.

Furthermore, it can be seen that even though organizations have so many employees, there are some that are regarded as talented employees. Most organizations would do their best to retain the talented employees because of the benefits they will bring to the organization. If organizations are truly willing to win the war for talent, then they need to keep finding, nurturing and developing extraordinary people, they must develop a capacity and new approaches to talent management (Powell & Lubitsh, 2007).

Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is implementing a strategy currently not used by the competition, whereas sustainable competitive advantage implies that the implemented strategy cannot be duplicated (Barney, 1991). Duplication of strategy is made much more difficult if resources rare, non-substitutable, valuable, and inimitable. Organisations must develop and nurture core competencies in order to establish and sustain their competitive advantage (Prahalad *et al*., 1990). Organisations need to invest in capabilities such as active information acquisition, incorporation of customer's voice/opinions, and knowledge sharing and distribution (Kumar *et al*., 2011).

We envisage the „glue" to linking sentiment analysis to sustainable competitive advantage to the knowledge management perspective in which knowledge is seen as a strategic asset with the potential to be a source of competitive advantage for an organization (Halawi *et al*., 2005). Thus, it is necessary for organizations to innovate from the generic thinking of competitive strategy, and instead consider the use of knowledge management. Additionally, knowledge management enables the organisations to remain competitive in the changing environment with more focus on adaptability, survival, and abilities (Rahimli, 2012). Thus the key to developing a sustainable competitive advantage lies in the ability to acquire and to transfer knowledge, which, as we had seen earlier, can be realized through the process of data mining.

Differentiation

Differentiation strategy involves the development of strengths that can give a firm a differential performance advantage above other competitors. Differentiation strategy is where an organization attempts to gain a competitive advantage by increasing the perceived value of their products or services relative to the perceived value of other firms' products or services. To implement these strategies successfully, organizations need to have an accurate view of the current competitive situation to persuade customers about the features of sustainable products (Pondeville, Swaen & de Rongé, 2013).

The major step in conceiving a differentiation strategy is to ascertain what makes an organization different from a competitor. Factors such as market sector, quality of work, the size of the firm, the image, graphical reach, involvement in client organizations, product, delivery system, and the marketing approach have been suggested to differentiate a firm (McCracken Wallance, 2000). Organizations use a differentiation strategy to achieve competitive advantage.

A differentiation strategy provides products or services that offer benefits that are different from those of competitors and that are widely valued by buyers. (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008) There are different differentiation strategies for the company to choose from, it can be, product differentiation, service differentiation, personnel differentiation, channel differentiation, and image differentiation. (Kotler & Keller, 2014).

Resource-Based View Theory

Resource-based theory reflects one approach to understanding the roots of superior success and its persistence. In line with the statement, that superior performance represents inherent disparities in productivity between firms (e.g., Demsetz, 1973), this work explains how idiosyncratic firm characteristics influence a company's ability to gain greater value than its rivals (Barney, 1991; Rumelt, 1984; Wernerfelt, 1984).

One type of resource-based research articulates a set of criteria that combine regulation of specific resource characteristics with a temporary or sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993; Peteraf & Barney, 2003). While different terminologies are used to expose the character of strategic resources, a general reference is made to importance, scarcity, imitability, and substitutability characteristics.

Empirical Review

Rafiei, Mehrtak, Amerzadeh, Rafiei, Moosavi and Kalhor (2023). The relationship between succession and intellectual capital with entrepreneurship in hospitals. The hospital environment is very dynamic and faces many internal and external changes. Healthcare knowledge and technology are developing at a swift pace. This study investigated the relationship between succession and intellectual capital with entrepreneurship at the Qazvin University of Medical Sciences hospital, Iran. The number of employees working in six hospitals was 2256, and according to Morgan's table, the required number of samples was 331. We distributed three hundred sixty-five questionnaires considering 10% of sample loss. We used a multi-stage stratified sampling method. In the first stage, each hospital was considered a stratum. After that, occupational groups were considered the next stratum within each hospital, and based on the ratio; the required number of samples for each occupational group was randomly selected. We used the Sobel test to investigate the mediating role of intellectual capital and the structural equation model to fit the research model. Succession aspects, including culturalization, meritocracy, job promotion path, and the role of senior managers, have a positive and significant effect on intellectual capital. Succession is only effective on intellectual capital and does not affect the personnel's entrepreneurship directly or through intellectual capital.

Simkhada (2023) examined the impact of succession planning practices on the profitability of Nepalese commercial banks. This study examines the impact of succession planning practices on the return on assets (RoA) of Nepalese commercial banks. The RoA was taken from the annual report of 20 commercial banks for the year 2020. Structured questionnaires were administered to examine the opinions of the respondents regarding succession-planning practices. This study has employed descriptive and causal comparative research designs to deal with the fundamental issues associated with the various influencing factors of succession planning in Nepalese commercial banks. The total number of observations for the study consists of 140 respondents mainly working in the human resource department of those banks. The regression model is estimated to test the significance and effect of succession planning practices on profitability. The study revealed that human resource planning, succession planning, training and development, job rotation and organization culture have positive impact on return on assets. It indicates that higher the human resource planning, succession planning, training and development, job rotation and organization culture higher will be the RoA. However, favoritism and nepotism have a negative impact on return on assets. It implies that increase in favoritism and nepotism in an organization leads to decrease in return on assets. The study concluded that succession planning is very important to increase the level of profitability of Nepalese commercial banks.

Bailo, Hassan, Sarif, Othman, A. (2023) investigated polygamy and family member relationship on Guinean family business succession planning. The aim of the paper is to identify the key factors that affect Guinean family business (FB) succession planning. The study also evaluates the impact of these factors on the succession planning process to ensure business continuity. This descriptive quantitative research is based on a survey of 383 family businesses FBs in Conakry, the capital city of Guinea. The structural equation model (SEM) was used to analyze and validate the model featuring factors that influence family business FB succession planning (FBSP). The Theory of Stewardess and the Theory of FB Rivalry have been employed in the study. While the incumbent attributes, firm attributes, and estate tax were revealed to have no significant influence on succession planning, the successor attributes and the family relationship significantly affected succession planning.

Francisca, Nambuswa and Namusonge (2023). Moderating effect of organization culture on the relationship between talent career management and employee performance in Insurance companies in Kenya. This study sought to examine the moderating effect of organization culture on the relationship between talent career management and employee performance in insurance companies in Kenya. The study was anchored on Human Capital Theory. The study adopted explanatory research design. The study was conducted in four insurance companies in Kenya. The target population of the study comprised of human resource managers, sales managers and sales agents. The sample size was 4 human resource managers, 4 sales managers and 377 sales agents. Stratified, simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques obtained the sample size. Questionnaire and interview schedule were used to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and presented in tabular form. Data was subjected to Hierarchical regression model. From Hierarchical regression model results talent career management accounted for 44.6% (R2 = 0.446) of the variance on employee performance, with moderator organizational culture explaining 49.4% (R2 = 0.493) of the variance and the interaction of career management and culture (CM*OC) explained 50.9% (R2 = 0.509) of the variance in employee performance in insurance companies. The regression coefficients indicated that career management (β = 0.484, P =0.000), organization culture (β=.174, P=0.000), were positive and statistically significant predictors of employee performance in insurance companies. The regression coefficients of interaction between career management and organization culture on employee performance (β =- 0.143, P =.002) was negatively significant. Therefore, organization culture had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between talent career management and employee performance in insurance companies. The study concludes that talent career management had a statistically significant positive impact on worker performance in Kenyan insurance companies. Organization culture had a significant moderating effect between talent career management and employee performance in insurance companies. The study recommends that managers of insurance companies wishing to maintain superior employee performance should put in place mechanisms to support career management. Firms should design career plans for their employees, which will increase employee morale, motivation and at same time reduce employee turnover.

Darsana, and Mananda, (2023) investigated succession planning in maintaining the existence of Family Entrepreneurship Hotel Business in Bali. In Bali, there are many family companies in the hotel business that failed in the second generation to lead the company and also many of which were successful, and even became big after being managed by the second generation due to success in the succession process, for example the I Gede Wirata and Kadek Wiranatha families who own 6 Bounty Group hotels, Putu Gde John Sastrawan with 4 Ramayana hotels, the late Ida Bagus Tjendana Putra with 4 Santrian hotels, based on this phenomenon, it appears that generational transfer (succession) of leadership in family companies is an important factor in the company's sustainability. Leadership succession in family companies does not always end in failure and brings company decline, it is evident that there are still companies that can survive for generations. Therefore, researchers are interested in researching and argue that it is necessary for family companies to prepare and plan for leadership succession as well and as early as possible to avoid failure in the intended leadership transformation. Seven things related to family companies are related to succession, namely: (1) unprofessional family companies; (2) there is no separation between company finances and personal finances; (3) family companies are considered unable to implement sound systems and procedures; (4) family companies only provide opportunities for family relatives to occupy key positions; (5) performance is not important, but more important is the ability to build a close relationship with the owner; (6) family companies will end up in the hands of the second generation, and (7) family companies do not view HR as an important company asset.

Wajidi, *et al*., (2023) examined the impact of Leadership on Effective Succession Planning: Comparison of Public and Private Organizations. Leadership plays a substantial role in effective succession planning in public and private organizations. In comparison to private organizations, most public organizations have a bureaucratic structure. A study has been conducted to observe the impact of leadership on effective succession planning in public and private organizations. Study based on qualitative methodology. We can successfully observe the nature of both organizations by conducting an interview study. The study chose two private organizations, such as Standard Chartered Bank and Bank Alfalah. Two other public organizations are also taken into observation, namely the National Bank of Pakistan and the First Women's Bank of Pakistan. N=250 people from the aforementioned organizations were observed for the study. According to one study, hiccups integrate the nature of tenancy and political administration in people working in the public sector, as well as work force framework principles, the absence of assets, and the absence of core interests. A study found that proper implementation of strategies needs to be taken into consideration because most organizations fail to implant the proper program. Decision-making is also important because it is necessary to take the right decision at the right time for effective succession planning.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised the cross sectional survey design. The population of the study comprised hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria. The target population comprises of 425 hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria. The sample size of 205 was arrived at using the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table. Firstly, for descriptive statistics, we analyzed the data using Mean and Standard Deviation, with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Secondly, for inferential statistics, we used the Structural Equation Modelling (AMOS-SEM), with the aid of AMOS 23.0, for the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 205 copies of questionnaire were disseminated, and 185 questionnaires were subsequently collected, resulting in a retrieval rate of 90%. Nonetheless, a subset of 20 copies, constituting 10% of the sample, were not collected as the participants faced challenges in allocating adequate time to complete them. Despite the researcher's persistent endeavours, which involved making multiple visits, sending email reminders, and making phone calls, the respondents were unable to fulfil their obligation to participate in the study. Due to the diligent efforts of the researcher, a significant proportion of the surveys, specifically 90 percent or 185 out of 205, were successfully retrieved. The questionnaires that were obtained were determined to be adequately filled out and suitable for the intended objectives of the research.

Table 1: Demographic (Descriptive) Data Analysis

Gender	**Response Rates**
Male	116
Female	69
Total	185 (100%)
Age of the Respondents	**Response Rates**
31-40Yrs	92
41-50Yrs	65
Above 50Yrs	28
Total	185 (100%)
Education Qualification	**Response Rates**
M.Sc/MBA/M.A	27
O/level (GCE, WASE, SSCE)	60
OND/B.Sc/B.Ed/B. A	98
Total	185 (100%)

According to Table 1, the respondents comprised of more males than female participants did. The male participants occupied 63% (116 respondents) of the population, while the female participants occupied 37% of the population (69 respondents). This implies that most workers in hotels in Rivers State are male. It shows that respondents between the ages of 31-40 years occupy a greater percentage of the population (50%), followed by those 41-50 years (35%), then those above 50 years (15%). This implies that most workers in the hotels in Bayelsa State are below 40years. The result shows that most of the respondents have their first degree (98 respondents), 60 respondents have their O-level, while 27 respondents have their Master's Degree. Most of the employees in the hotels are degree holders, which implies that they have no difficulty responding to questionnaire items, and have sufficient knowledge on what succession planning and competitive advantage entails.

Hypothesis One

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between career development and differentiation**.**

This section intends to measure the correlation between career development and differentiation of hotels firms in Rivers State.

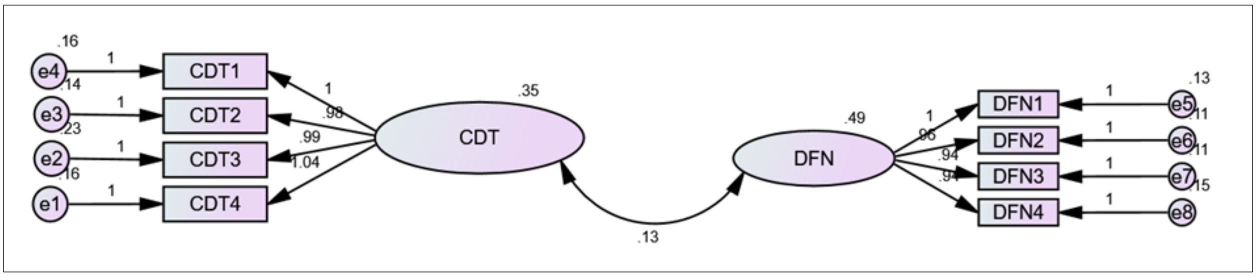

Figure 1: Test of Hypotheses 1

Source: SPSS-AMOS Version 23.0 Output, 2024

Table 2: Test of Hypotheses 1 – 2

Hypotheses			***β***	***p***	***t***
Career Development	<-->	Differentiation	0.134	0.000	4.773

Source: SPSS-AMOS Version 23.0 Output, 2024

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between Career Development and Differentiation of hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The path relationship analysis presented in figure 1 and table 2 indicate that there are positive and significant paths between Career Development and Differentiation (β = 0.134, t = 4.773, p = 0.000). The study therefore observes that there is a positive and significant association between Career Development and Differentiation. In light of this, the study therefore rejects the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that *there is a significant relationship between Career Development and Differentiation of hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria*. The beta value (β = 0.134) implies that a unit change in Career Development will account for up to 13.4% total variation in Differentiation. This implies that an increase in career development is associated with increase in differentiation. This finding aligns with Ismail, Madrah, Aminudin and Ismail (2013) in their study on the mediating role of career development in the relationship between career program and personal outcomes. Statistically, the result demonstrates that career development does act as an important mediating variable in the relationship between career program and personal outcomes in the career program model of the studied organization. The paper provides discussion, implications and conclusion.

Many previous studies examined organizational career development programme using an indirect effects model. They used 445 respondents in Portugal (Ferreira *et al*., 2007), 330 Swiss eighth graders in Switzerland (Hirschi, 2009), 5500 households taken from British Household Panel Survey (Theodossiou & Zangelis, 2009), 620 students from Portuguese school system (Janeiro, 2010), 13 in-depth interviews with workers from knowledge intensive working context (Wilkens & Nermerich, 2011), and 140 employees in a Sabah local government in Borneo (Ismail *et al*., 2013). The results of these surveys reported two important findings: first, the ability of administrators to properly plan (e.g., set up goals and policies) and manage (e.g., monitoring the progression of employees in career paths) career programmes was found to motivate employees to enhance their career satisfaction (Theodossiou & Zangelis, A. 2009; Wilkens & Nermerich, 2011; Ismail *et al*., 2013) and career commitment (Ferreira *et al*., 2007; Hirschi, 2009).

Hypothesis Two

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between talent retention and differentiation.

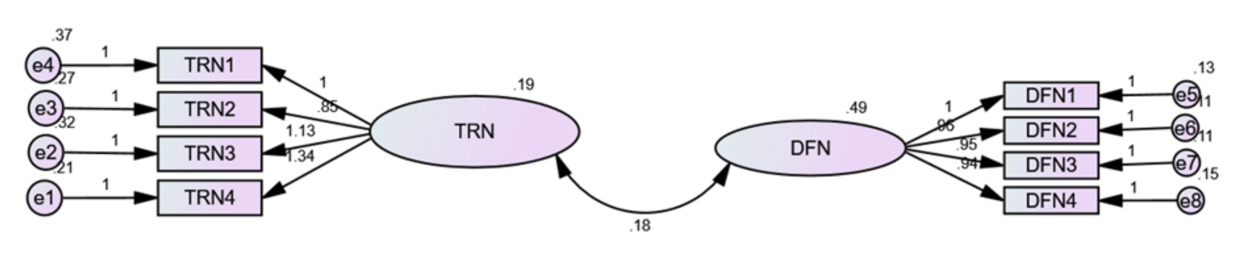

Figure 2: Test of Hypothesis 2
Source: SPSS-AMOS Version 23.0 Output, 2024

Table 3: Test of Hypothesis 2

Hypotheses			***β***	***p***	***t***
Talent Retention	<-->	Differentiation	0.182	0.000	5.248

Source: SPSS-AMOS Version 23.0 Output, 2024

H$_{O2}$: There is no significant relationship between Talent Retention with differentiation of hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria.

The path relationship analysis presented in figure 4.9 and table 4.12 indicate that there are positive and significant paths between talent retention and differentiation (*β* = 0.182, t = 5.248, *p* = 0.000). The study therefore observes that there is a positive and significant relationship between Talent Retention and Differentiation. In light of this, the study therefore rejects the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that *there is a significant relationship between Talent Retention and Differentiation of hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria*. The beta value (*β* = 0.182) implies that a unit change in Talent Retention will account for up to 18.2% total variation in Differentiation. Jindal and Shaikh (2021) corroborate this position in their study on talent retention: A mediator of the relationship between talent management strategies and succession planning. The findings of the research present that TR plays a role of mediator in the relationship of TID, TD and succession planning in organisations. This study helps pharmaceutical companies to be future ready for succession planning by using their regular talent management strategies skilfully. This study beautifully develops an empirical relationship between TID, TD, and succession planning with the mediating effect of TR. Research brings out the theoretical importance of ILM theory. This, as per best of researchers' knowledge, was not presented in earlier research on talent management or on succession planning.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that succession planning, career development, and talent retention are critical factors in achieving a competitive advantage through differentiation for hotels in Rivers State. By investing in these areas, hotels can create a unique and desirable brand, attract and retain top talent, and enhance guest satisfaction.

The research also highlights the importance of aligning succession planning, career development, and talent retention strategies with the overall differentiation objectives of hotels in Rivers State. By focusing on developing talent that aligns with the hotel's unique value proposition, hotels can create a distinctive brand that sets them apart from competitors.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that succession planning, career development, and talent retention are not only essential for the effective management of human resources but also key drivers of competitive advantage through differentiation for hotels in Rivers State. By investing in these areas, hotels can create a sustainable and thriving business that is well-positioned to succeed in a competitive market.

Recommendations

In view of the research and the importance of succession planning and competitive advantage of hotels, the study suggests:

1. Ensure that career development programmes are aligned with the hotel's overall business strategy and differentiation objectives. This will help to ensure that the programmes are focused on developing the skills and competencies that are most valuable to the hotel's success.
2. Offer competitive compensation and benefits packages to attract and retain top talent. This includes competitive salaries, bonuses, and a comprehensive benefits package.
3. Implement effective performance management systems that focus on measuring and rewarding employees for their contributions to the hotel's differentiation strategy. This will help to

identify high-potential employees and provide them with the necessary development opportunities.

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