

**TALENT MANAGEMENT: A CRITICAL
INVESTIGATION IN THE THAI HOSPITALITY
INDUSTRY**

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INDUSTRY**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
F&B	Food and Beverages
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GM	General manager, CEO, Owner
HD	Human resource department manager, Human resource department assistant manager
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
LM	Line manager
SHRM	Society of Human Resource Management
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
THA	Thai Hotel Association
TM	Talent Management
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WTTC	World Travel & Tourism Council

LIST OF DEFINITION OF TERMS

ASEAN Economic Community	The economic integration scheme among ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) countries. It aims to bring members to be one community; comprising of three pillars: ASEAN Political-Security Community; ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.
Hospitality Industry	The industry which relies heavily on human labour, and the work is very much customer oriented and as a result of the nature of this work, the qualities needed of workers in this industry are different from those of other industries.
International branded hotel	The hotels which are located more than one place and operated more than one country
Talent	The individuals who possesses in the form of its employee high skills and competencies at all level. They also can influence their counterparts as a role model, which will lead to business success.
Talent management	Strategic management to increase the quality of product and services by filling talent in all levels, and developing processes of attracting, developing, retaining and utilising employees with the required skills and aptitudes to meet current and future business strategy.

Talent retention	The technique that the organisation use to motivate talented workers to stay in the organisation
Thai branded chain hotel	The hotels which are located more than one place, operated within Thailand only and Thai management
Thai branded individual hotel	The hotels which are located in one place, operated within Thailand only and Thai management

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

Talent is considered to be one of the main drivers of business success, and the ability to manage talent effectively has become critical in the current business environment. However, there is lack of clarity about the concept of talent in different industry contexts. Also, the hospitality industry is customer oriented and reliant on low skilled workers, and being able to define and manage talent effectively would help the industry to sustain competitiveness. Therefore, this research investigated the application of the concept of talent and talent management within the Thai hospitality industry, and specifically how talent is defined and managed in this industry. The research was also undertaken within the context of the introduction of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), which was anticipated to lead increased competition for talented workers.

The research used qualitative research methods to get an in-depth understanding of the subject matter. In total 38 semi-structured interviews were conducted at the management level. Data from the interviews is supplemented by documentation and observations; and this ensured triangulation of the responses and thus increased validity of the research.

This research uncovered that the concept of talent was widely applied amongst the participating hotels. Generally, talent is defined as high potential or high performance; and the qualities of talented workers include capability, competence, loyalty, and contribution. Also, talent referred to key positions — that is, ‘talent’ is a term related to some workers rather than all workers in the organisation. Moreover, talent was more an acquired rather than natural ability; and this depended on the organisation’s context and the ability of the individual to transfer previous experiences to ‘fit’ with the current environment or situation. Regarding the management of talent, this research identified two main challenges that have to be overcome — the recruitment and retention of talent. The participants indicated that they mainly use both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to combat these challenges. Consequently, HR activities (especially recruitment and development) are linked to talent retention; with the ultimate goal being to help retain the best talent in the organisation.

The implications of these research findings are that organisations need to pay more attention to the recruitment and retention of talent through ‘building good relationships and talent pipelines’ among workers and making employees feel at home within organisations. This fits in with the Thai culture which is based on the idea of the ‘collective society’. This will help organisations understand the art of winning the ‘war for talent’.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Overview of the Research

Over the last few years, the hospitality industry (especially the hotel sector) like many other industries has been facing rapid changes resulting not only from globalisation but also from the economic recession hitting the world. One such event was the collapse of the Lehman Brothers in 2008 which resulted in the unprecedented slow-down of global economic growth (Baba & Packer, 2009; Swedberg, 2010). Hotel businesses need to deal with challenges and changes successfully in order to grow and to gain (or maintain) a competitive edge. Hotels must ensure that they provide the kind of service that will satisfy customers; and one sure way of achieving this objective is to identify ‘talented workers’ in order to manage this group of workers effectively. Talented workers are those individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance, and/or the business critical positions that substantially contribute to the organisation’s sustainable competitive advantage and growth; and the goal should be to manage this talent effectively.

Emerging economies such as that of Thailand are not exempt from the ‘economic recession hitting the world’, and therefore it is imperative that they remain competitive by identifying, recruiting and retaining the best employees in their organisations. The growth of hospitality and tourism industries in Thailand (predicted to grow at the rate 6.4 per cent, 2014-2024) has been significantly influenced by the growth of the global tourism industry; with the global tourism industry itself predicted to grow at a rate of 4.2 per cent per year over the next ten years (2014-2024) (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2014b). Thailand has also become one of the most important tourist destinations in South East Asia (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2014a). According to the United Nations World Trade Organisation (2012), in 2011, travel and tourism supported over 11% of total employment; and also contributed approximately 16.3% to the total gross domestic product (GDP) of Thailand. As tourism has grown to become a significant source of foreign currency, improving the quality of services provided and establishing valuable long-term relationships with customers becomes more crucial than ever to the

success of the hotel sector, which is the main sector in hospitality and tourism industry. This is particularly urgent given the current world economic situation and the interconnectedness of the world today (globalisation).

In Thailand, the Thai Hotel Association (THA) is one of the main organisations that support member hotels in their endeavour to attain good standards. Because it is expected that the tourism industry (including the hotel sector) will grow by 6.4 per cent over the next decade, hotels in Thailand need to put emphasis on having the right employees to ensure they can gain a slice of these growth targets.

Employees, generally, are recognised as a key factor towards ensuring that the organisation drives towards success. This view is supported by Sharkey and Eccher (2011), who after interviewing leaders of the Fortune 500 organisations — concluded that employees are the most valuable asset. They also concluded that employees (that is, human resources) help to improve and enhance business performance. Talented workers are highly scarce resource and organisations put a lot of effort in trying to attract and retain them, hence why the McKinsey (Consultant Company) coined the phrase ‘*war for talent*’ (Axelrod, Handfield-Jones, & Michaels, 2002; Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels, 1998; Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). Generally, talented workers are defined as individuals who possess ideas, knowledge, cognitive ability, skills, and potential; and are thus able to use these abilities to contribute good performance for the organisation and also supplement other resources that are available in the organisations (Goffee & Jones, 2007; Michaels et al., 2001; Tansley, 2011; Tansley, Harris, Stewart, & Turner, 2006). Talented workers are in great demand and there is fierce competition for their services; and therefore the challenge facing organisations is to remain competitive through defining what talent is, acquiring, developing and retaining that talent (Cheese, Thomas, & Craig, 2008).

The hospitality industry in general and particularly the hotel sector are heavily labour intensive, with a varied labour force ranging from housekeepers to top managerial positions. In addition, hotels rely a lot on low skilled or unskilled workers (Baum, 1993, 2008; Duncan, Scott, & Baum, 2013; Price, 1994). Given the varied nature of the skills level in this industry and the low skills level for some positions, it is therefore not clear

how the concept of talent is applicable to the hotel industry. Furthermore, how is the concept of talent operationalised? Do we include all workers or some workers in the definition of ‘talent’?

Furthermore, there are different definitions of talented workers in different organisations, positions, and industries (Gelens, Dries, Hofmans, & Pepermans, 2013; Iles, 2013; Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010; Tansley, 2011; Tansley, Kirk, & Tietze, 2013; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012). The question therefore becomes which of the different definitions of talented workers are (/or can be) applied to hotels. The question of which of the ‘many definitions of talent’ are applied to the hotel industry was raised by Baum (2008, p.720) who suggested that: *“Talent, in the context of the hospitality and tourism, however, does not necessarily mean the same thing as it might in other sectors of the economy.”*

One of the main reasons why this thesis focused on talented workers within the hotel sector in Thailand is due to the ‘potential’ threat posed by the emergency of Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) aims to transform the economic landscape of ASEAN countries into a single market and production base (see Section 2.6). The single market and production base means more free competition within the member nations (Cariss & Vorhauser-Smith, 2014); and this free movement would lead to an increased threat to the hotel sector in Thailand. As noted above, ‘talented workers’ can make a *“difference to organisational performance, either through their immediate contribution or in the longer-term by demonstrating the highest levels of potential”* (Tansley et al., 2007, p. 8). They also hold business critical positions that substantially contribute to the organisation’s sustainable competitive advantage and growth (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014). Therefore, focusing on talented workers would help Thai hotels to remain competitive in the face of the threat from AEC.

Furthermore, as Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz (2013) noted: *“the ongoing confusion about the meaning of ‘talent’ within the world of work is hindering the establishment of widely accepted talent management theories and practices.” (p.290)* and may even lead to ill-defined conclusions about talent. My thesis is that if

hotels in Thailand fail to implement and establish proper strategies of managing talent due to a lack of clear direction and understanding of the concept of “talent”; this will likely result in them failing to fight competition from AEC. Through defining and operationalising the concept of ‘talent’ within the participating hotels, this thesis would help participating Thai hotels stave-off competition.

Another pertinent and closely related concept to talent is the concept of talent management. Talent Management (TM) is viewed as one of the primary management tools or strategies for managing talented workers (Cappelli, 2008b). Talent management becomes a top priority for organisations in managing talented workers, if they are to provide quality services and establish valuable long-term relationships with customers. Undoubtedly, many top executives recognise that employees, especially talented workers are critical drivers of their business success (Chambers et al., 1998; Michaels et al., 2001). For example, a survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2007) found that over 70 per cent of employers believe that the departure of talented employees from the organisation has a negative effect on business performance. Furthermore, a survey of the Society of Human Resource Management (2006) concluded that the organisations which have TM strategies were more likely to be able to recruit a pool of talented workers to fill their vacancies, and thus succeed in their business (Fegley, 2006).

O’Leary, Lindholm, Whitford, and Freeman (2002) point out that all organisations need to pay more attention to talented workers. Therefore, the challenge for management is how to manage talented workers in their organisations. Talent retention is considered as one of the highly important TM practices for achieving this objective. Managing talent cannot be achieved through the human resource department working alone, but by the whole management structure (e.g. Chief Executive Officers/general managers, line managers and Human Resource (HR) professionals) playing a role. Therefore, the key to effective TM is that management teams at all levels should also be involved in strategic decision-making. However, research conducted by the McKinsey Consultancy Company found that few organisations have specific practices for managing talented workers (Michaels et al., 2001).

It has been claimed that organisations proclaim that people are their most important assets and capital, however many do not act that way (Lawler, 2005). Lawler (2005) points out that by capitalising on human resources and integrating it into the strategy of the business, then a source of competitive advantage can be provided at the same time as, and by, making employees happy (e.g. attract and motivate employees) and thus retain their talented employees. The survey conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found that the proportion of employers reporting an increase in competition for well-qualified talented workers has risen threefold from 20 per cent in 2009 to 62 per cent in 2013 (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2013).

In conclusion, we note that it is not clear how the concept of talent is applied in the hospitality industry and particularly the hotel sector; and also whether all workers or some workers have to be included in the definitions of 'talent'. In addition, there are different definitions of talent that are used in different industries as Baum (2008; p.720) notes, talent "*does not necessarily mean the same thing as it might in other sectors of the economy.*" Therefore, besides attempting to define the concept of talent within the hospitality industry, the thesis would also focus on how organisations manage talented workers. Managing talented workers effectively is increasingly becoming a top priority for many organisations, and examining the impact of strategies for managing talented workers is an extremely important area of study (Van Dyke & Strick, 1990). However, there is a general lack of clear definitions on what talent is within the context of the hospitality industry (particularly the hotel sector) in general and within the Thai hotels in particular. In addition, there is also a lack of clarity on how talent is managed within the hotel sector. This lack of consensus on what 'talent' is has negative implications, and thus Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013, p. 291) noted that:

The ongoing confusion about the meaning of talent is hindering the establishment of widely acknowledged TM theories and practices, thus stalling scholarly advancement. In addition, the lack of construct clarity might lead to a lack of confidence in the conclusions that can be drawn from the existing literature.

Therefore, this research will critically review definitions of talent, and investigate how the concept of talent is applied within the context of the hotel sector. Furthermore, the

research explores and evaluates how talent is managed within the Thai hotels. In addition the research will also add to the body of literature in this area of study.

1.2. Rationale and Justification for the Research

1.2.1. Rationale

In this section, the motivation and rationale for conducting this research will be discussed. Firstly, the hospitality industry plays a very important role within the Thai economy. This industry created approximately 6 million jobs (15.4 per cent of total employment) and contributed 22.2 per cent of GDP in 2013 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2014a). This research focuses on the hotel sector which forms the main part of tourism industry; and also due to the fact that the number of hotels is increasing every year, with the number expected to grow at 6.4 per cent in the next ten years (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2014a). More importantly, there is a political drive to establish a new scheme of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), whose aim is to create a single economic market (discussed in detail in Section 2.6.1). Travel and Tourism sectors play a very important role in ASEAN countries' overall economies. To ensure growth, sustainability and greater contribution to ASEAN economies, hotels need to be attractive to tourists. This attractiveness entails provision of excellent quality services by the tourism industry within the region. Having talented workers to deliver these quality services should become a norm, and would thus guarantee the satisfaction of tourists visiting the region. Through exploring and evaluating how talented workers are managed within the context of the Thai hotel industry, the research would provide evidence and recommendations for good practice in talent management which would help Thai hotels to remain competitive with AEC.

Furthermore, there is general lack of empirical study and investigation into how the concept of 'talent' is applied within the hospitality industry; especially the hotel sector (a sector which relies heavily on unskilled workforce and which is labour intensive), and particularly within the Thai hotel sector. As discussed above, Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013, p. 291) notes that the 'lack of consensus on what talent is' is adversely affecting the development of scholarly work within the field of TM.

The research will add to the body of literature in this area of study.

Also, there are very few studies, for instance, Baum (2008), Hughes & Rog (2008) and Nzonzo and Chipfuva (2013) which focus on managing talent (based on Talent Management (TM), which is widely known as a strategy for managing talent), and on the factors which affect the management of talent especially in hotel sector. More specifically, fewer studies evaluate how ‘talented workers’ are managed within the context of the hospitality industry in Southeast Asia; and none within the Thai hotel sector. For example, Lehmann (2009) studied the management of talent in the service industry, and the research focused on Malaysia and Thailand. Meanwhile, Piansoongnern et al. (2011) studied talent management in the Thai cement company. Similarly, Poocharoen et al. (2013) focused on talent management in the public sector in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. Thus, it is expected that this research will add to the body of knowledge on managing talent in the domain of hospitality industry.

Finally, as this research is partly funded by the Thai government, one of the requirements of the grant from the Thai government was an expectation of the author to conduct the research in the field of Human Resource Management (HRM) and within the tourism industry. In addition, the researcher took the opportunity to use her knowledge and background in Management, HRM, Human Resource Development (HRD) and the tourism industry to carry out a field based research study in the hotel sector; and contributes to research in this field. It is anticipated that practitioners and scholars within the broader field of TM can use the research as a reference tool.

Furthermore, the driver in this research was to find-out whether the concept of talent is applicable in the hotel sector given the general low skills nature of work. If it is applicable, the question is how talent is defined and identified within this sector? The researcher’s hypothesis is that talent exists everywhere; and thus aims to investigate whether this is true and how that talent is managed in this industry.

1.2.2. Justification

The research focuses on hotels within the Thai Hotel Association (THA) because it is the official and main association that supports and assists member hotels to attain certain standards and become star-rated.

Through investigating the definitions, identifications and application of the concept of talent within the hotel sectors and how talented workers are managed within THA, the researcher will gain a good understanding of talent management strategies adopted within the context of Thailand.

There are 167 hotels that are members of the THA (see Appendix 8) located in all the regions of Thailand and are classified into 4 to 5 star ratings. The THA sets the standard and criteria for awarding a star rating to each hotel. The star-rating system defines the qualities and characteristics of the hotel. The three broad areas that are defined by the star-rating system are the standard of construction and facilities, the standard of maintenance, and the standard of services. Further consideration includes the location and surroundings. The variety of ethics and quality of all of these services are also factors in determining a star-rating.

Managing talented workers effectively is considered the most appropriate strategy for harnessing business competitiveness. Among other things, there is a need to focus on talent retention. For example, research shows that talent retention is among the most important human resource practices (Hughes & Rog, 2008; Van Dyke & Strick, 1990). Furthermore, employee motivation has a significant relationship with retention policies (Bushe, Chiwira, & Chawawa, 2012).

1.3. Research Aim, Objectives, and Questions

The general aim is to explore and critically review available literature and identify gaps in empirical research relating to the concept of talent and talent management, and critically investigate the understanding and application of talent management within the hospitality industry and specifically the hotels sector in Thailand and the implications for

retention of talented workers in the hotel sector in relation to the emerging regional context of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

The concept of talent is applied mostly within domains such as academia, writers, etc. but does not generally appear to be widely used within the context of the hospitality industry. Therefore, this thesis would investigate how the concept of talent fits within the hospitality industry (hotel sector). In addition, there are different theoretical approaches to defining talent — for example: Is talent a natural or an acquired ability; does talent relate to some or all workers? The thesis will therefore investigate and discuss whether talent within the context of the hotel industry falls into any of these classifications, and then explore the implications (if any) of this.

In addition to defining and understanding the concept of talent within this area; the thesis will investigate how participating hotels manage (attract, motivate, and retain) their talent. The research would focus on the views of participants at management level within hotels that are members of the Thai Hotel Association (THA).

To achieve the stated aim, the following have been set as objectives of the research:

- 1) To critically investigate and determine how the concept of talent applies in the hospitality industry
- 2) To evaluate critically how participating hotels manage talents?
- 3) To conceptualise the application of the concept of talent used among hotels, and how talent is managed.

There are five research questions that the research is set to explore.

1. How is talent defined among the participating hotels?
2. What are the criteria used to identify talented workers?
3. What are the factors that influence how talented workers are identified?
4. What challenges are faced by hotels when managing talent?
5. How do participating hotels within THA manage talent in order to cope with the challenges?

1.4. Research Procedure

This section presents the overall research procedure (see Figure 1.1). This research started by reviewing the related literature, and thus establishing the contextual need for this research. In particular, the literature review focused on understanding the concept of talent, management of talent, the nature of the hospitality industry; and factors that influence the definition, identification and management of talent. Through this exercise, the researcher aimed to understand the context and also find out if there are any gaps or needs within this area of research. Following this exercise; the research aim, objectives and research questions were determined (See Appendices 1, 2 and 3). After that, the research design including the paradigm, approach, and strategy were determined; and also the design of the data collection instrument.

Initial contact was made with hotels that met the research criteria; and this was followed-up by fieldwork. The instruments that were used during the fieldwork were semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentations. After gathering all data, the data were collated, analysed and the findings presented. The findings thus informed the understanding of the concept of talent within the hotel sector in Thailand and the way to manage talent in this sector.

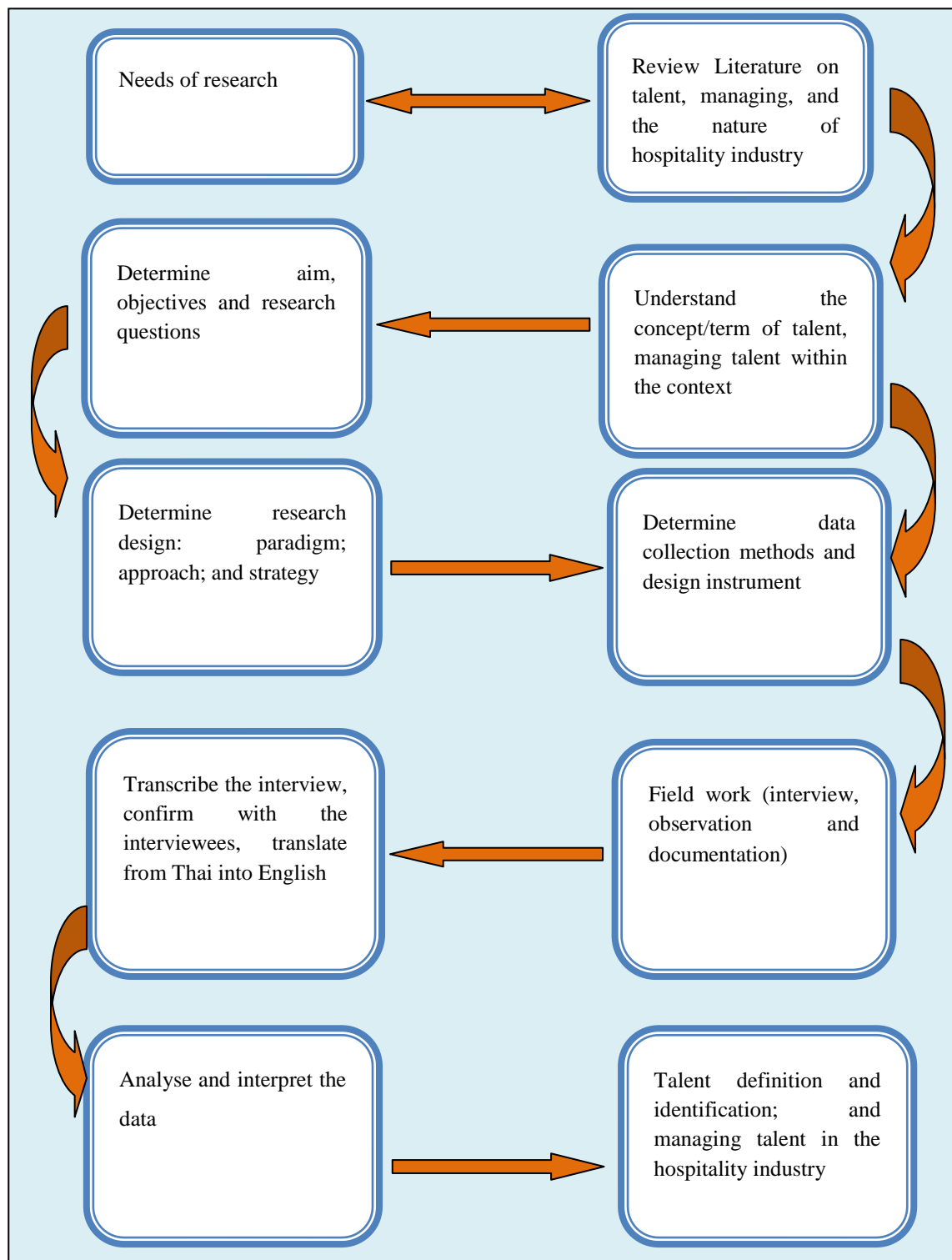


Figure 1.1: Research Procedure

1.5. Arrangement of Thesis

The thesis has six chapters, and the six chapters are as follows:

1.5.1. Chapter 1 Introduction

Chapter 1 briefly presents the introduction (and overview and background) of this research; and presents the reasons why understanding the concept of talent is important within the hospitality industry and especially in the hotel sector. The rationale of the research is briefly explained and the justification for selecting hotels under THA. For example, hotels that are members of THA were chosen because THA is the main official hotel association in Thailand. Finally, the research aim and objectives are also discussed.

1.5.2. Chapter 2 Literature review

Meanwhile Chapter 2 presents the literature review. The literature review chapter has been split into three parts: review of the concept of talent; management of talent; and lastly the background of the hospitality industry in Thailand.

In the first part of the literature review, the author explores the concept of talent; and in particular focuses on the definitions and identification of talent. The review includes tracings the origins of the concept of talent and how that has changed overtime. Questions about the nature of talent are also explored for example: Is talent a natural or an acquired ability? Does it apply to some workers or all workers? Is it transferable or context dependent? We also explore how this concept fits within the specific context of the hospitality industry in general, and specifically how they might be applied within the context of the Thai hotel sector.

The chapter also investigates how talent is managed. Here we also investigate the challenges of managing talent. For example, talent turnover was identified as one of the main barriers of managing talent effectively in the hospitality industry. Consequently, in

this section of the literature review we also discuss talent retention and the factors that influence/effect talent retention.

The final part details the background of the hospitality industry and the hotel sector, we initially explore the background of Thailand. This includes a review of the Thai culture and its labour market and explores how these affect the concept of talent. Here we also discuss the threat that might arise to Thai hotels due to the emergence of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) — which was expected to be completely introduced during 2015: However, according to the Deloitte (2015) noted that 2015 is the agreement target set; it will be fully implemented in 2020. The background information aims to show the importance of conducting this research; and provides a context of the research.

1.5.3. Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology that was used in this thesis. The chapter details the research philosophy, the research strategy and the research method adopted in this thesis, and explains why these are appropriate for this research. Furthermore, the chapter details how the research was designed and adapted, the data collection approach, and ethical issues that arise thereof.

1.5.4. Chapter 4 Findings and analysis

This chapter details the findings of the empirical research. The chapter is split into two sections. It started from the understanding of the background of the concept of talent among the participants, and the conclusion was that talent within the hotel industry mainly refers to some workers and specifically managerial talent. Talent referred to some workers and specifically those in managerial level positions who possess competence and who fit the organisation (and industry) + commitment (want to work with organisation) and contribution (performance to the customer, co-worker and subordinates, and the organisation). The quality of talent among the participating hotels also referred to the three combinations: competency; commitment (to work, to the organisation, and to the industry); and contribution (to both customers and co-workers).

In addition to the definition and identification of talent, the importance of talent (especially in assisting the organisation to remain competitive) was discussed. Talent recruitment and retention were identified as important challenges and the goal is for organisations to influence talented workers to commit to work for the organisations. Thus, different approaches to talent retention are discussed.

1.5.5. Chapter 5 Discussion of Findings

This chapter discusses the findings of the empirical research. The chapter analyses and discusses the empirical findings; and links the findings with the theory and literature.

1.5.6. Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the research. The conclusions and recommendations are drawn in-line with the overall research aim and objectives. The chapter also illustrates the contributions of the research: contribution to theory; contribution to methodology; contribution to policy setting; and contribution to practice. This section also highlights the research limitations from the view of researcher; and recommendations for future research are offered.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Over the last two decades there has been a lot of research focused on ‘talent management’ (Iles, et al., 2010; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Mellahi & Collings, 2010; Michaels et al., 2001; Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & Sels, 2014). At the core of TM is the concept of ‘talent’. The main reason for focusing on talent is that talent can contribute ‘added value’ to organisations (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Iles, et al., 2010; McDonnell, Lamare, Gunnigle, & Lavelle, 2010; Michaels et al., 2001). Talent is also a crucial source of maximising organisational performance (Gelens et al., 2013; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Mellahi & Collings, 2010; Nijs et al., 2014). Tansley (2011) notes that, despite the widespread research on the concept of talent, there is difficulty defining and identifying talent; and as a result there remains a lot of confusion on the meaning and definitions of the term ‘talent’ (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012; Tansley, 2011; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). Another related theme that has been identified as arising within this area is the shortage of talent — this led to the McKinsey Consultancy Company coining the phrase ‘war for talent’. The phrase ‘war for talent’ arose due to the general shortage of ‘talented workers’ in the workplace, with organisations competing with each other for this scarce resource (talent).

However, the concept of ‘talent’ is not normally applied within the domain of the hospitality industry. This appears to be mainly due to the fact that the hospitality industry in general, and the hotel sector in particular are heavily labour intensive with a varied labour force ranging from housekeepers to top managerial positions. Hotels also rely a lot on low skilled or unskilled workers (Baum, 1993, 2008; Duncan et al., 2013; Price, 1994). Given the reliance on a varied and mostly unskilled workforce, the questions therefore become: *How is the concept of talent applied in hospitality industry? Also, how is the concept of talent defined and conceptualised within this industry?* The other question could be: *What are the challenges and problems that arise while defining talent, and how are talented workers managed?* Other questions that might arise thereof are: *Do we include all workers or some workers in the definitions of ‘talent’?*

Another pertinent problem that arises regarding the issue of talent is that there are different definitions of talent. These definitions appear to differ according to industries, organisations, etc. (Gelens et al., 2013; Iles, 2013; Iles, Chuai, et al., 2010; Tansley, 2011; Tansley et al., 2013; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012). The question that arises therefore is which of the different definitions of ‘talent’ are applicable to the hospitality industry? The lack of consensus on the definition of ‘talent’ is having negative implications (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Nijs et al., 2014; Silzer & Dowell, 2010). Thus, Gallardo-Gallardo et al., (2013, p.291) noted that:

“...the on-going confusion about the meaning of talent is hindering the establishment of widely acknowledged TM theories and practices, thus stalling scholarly advancement. In addition, the lack of construct clarity might lead to a lack of confidence in the conclusions that can be drawn from the existing literature”.

The argument has also been put forward which suggests that the majority of literature on TM takes the existence of the talent construct for granted, and consequently do not formulate clear definitions of what talent is? (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Thunnissen & Arensbergen, 2015). Baum (2008, p. 270) further argues that talent, in the context of the hospitality and tourism industry, might *“not necessarily mean the same thing as it might in other sectors of the economy.”*

In this literature review chapter; we review the hospitality industry in Thailand, examine the concept and definitions of talent, and talent management. Specifically, the literature review will consider the different definitions of talent and how they fit within the specific context of the hospitality industry in general, and specifically how they are applied within the context of the Thai hotel sector. Indeed, it has been argued that developing and managing talent has become a challenging and critical area for HR (Human Resource) managers (Farndale, Scullion, & Sparrow, 2010); with both scholars and practitioners seeking to understand these challenges and seek solutions (Sparrow, Hird, & Balain, 2011). Some of the reasons for the focus on this area include, ‘talent shortages’, economic crisis, demographic changes, and globalisation. Thus, there is a growing need of developing human resource management (HRM) approaches that enhance retention

and development of talented employees (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Gelens et al., 2013). Therefore, we contend that Thai hotels are not exempt from this problem, and this is particularly so within the context of the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) project. The AEC project aims to create a single market among the ASEAN members (see Section 2.6). Furthermore, we thus also note that understanding how the concept of ‘talent’ fits within this industry is the cornerstone of finding solutions to some of these challenges. The chapter also explores talent retention. How talent is managed and motivated?

Since this thesis focuses on the hotel sector in Thailand and explores the concept of talent within the context of AEC, the next section details the Thailand context. This includes an overview of Thailand, and a discussion of how the Thai hotel sector will be affected by the introduction of the AEC project.

2.2. Background: Talent – The Conceptual Framework

The aim of this section of the literature review is to explore the concept of ‘talent’, and the objective of the literature review is to answer the questions “*What are talents’, and how are they defined?*” and “*how the concept of Talent is applied within the domain of the hospitality industry?*” Furthermore, in this section we will operationalise the definition of ‘Talent’ as applied to this thesis.

A clear understanding of the definitions and conceptualisation of the term ‘talent’ is essential for the success of organisations (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Michaels et al., 2001; Tansley, 2011; Williams, 2000); and it is argued that this is particularly more-so for the hospitality industry as it is heavily labour intensive. Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013, p. 290) noted that the lack of clarity and conceptualisation of the term ‘talent’ was also contributing to ‘conceptual confusion’ within the area of ‘Talent Management’, which is another closely related subject (see also Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Nijs et al., 2014; Thunnissen et al., 2014; Silzer & Church, 2010).

However, Williams (2000) expressed an almost contrary view on whether there is need to have a clear definition of 'talent'. He essentially argued that it is unrealistic to attempt to define 'talent' clearly. He also argued those terms such as:

"...exceptionally talented', 'gifted' or 'very able', together with the concept of 'high potential' have stimulated discussion and invited argument over a great many years. And often there is an unrealistic need for precise definitions..." (Williams, 2000, p. 34).

The argument is that perhaps there is nothing wrong with a *"...lack of consistently definitive or absolute measures"* when it comes to some concepts. According to this view, the confusion regarding this term is expected to continue for a long time as long as we continue to chase the 'vain shadow' of clarity of definitions (McDonnell & Collings, 2011; Tansley, 2011; Williams, 2000).

Nonetheless, what appears to be non-debateable is that there is a general lack of consensus or agreement on the definitions, nature and scope of 'talent'. It has been argued that the term talent is vague, for example, Tansley (2011, p. 266) observed that *"people are rarely precise about what they mean by the term talent in organisations"*, and the implications of whatever definitions are adopted are not usually fully explored in terms of their effect on the management of talent. Davies, Cutt, Flynn, Mowl, and Orme (2007, p. 1) contend that it ('talent') is an abstract concept which requires some definitions. They further argue that different people understand it differently at different times, and so do different organisations (CIPD, 2007; Davies et al., 2007; Tansley, 2011).

According to the thesis by Kabwe (2011, p. 5) there are issues concerning the origin of the word 'Talent' which are contributing to the problem of defining and conceptualising the term 'talent'. Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) and Tansley (2011) also identified similar issues as contributory factors. Therefore, this literature review will initially explore the origins of the term 'talent' and identify how this has contributed to the 'conceptual confusion'.

Besides the history and origins of the term 'talent', another issue which has been cited as contributing to the problem of defining and conceptualisation of the term 'talent' is the

‘lack of awareness of previous work defining talent’ (Tansley, 2011; Kabwe, 2011; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). The failure to acknowledge previous work in this area has led to “*strands of knowledge developing in isolation.*” The talent definition and conceptualisation framework, however, need to take into consideration the fact that ‘talent’ can mean different things to different people (type of work), at different times and different organisations (CIPD, 2007; Davies et al., 2007; Tansley, 2011).

In this thesis, it is proposed that there is a lot of mileage to be gained from borrowing definitions and conceptualisation of the term ‘talent’ from other fields such as education and sport. However, it might also be necessary to factor-in the unique qualities of workers in this particular industry. Certainly the hospitality industry, and particularly the hotel sector presents challenges and problems (as discussed in Section 2.4), hence the reason for asking the question “*How is the concept of Talent applied within the domain of the hospitality industry?*”

Initially, the researcher will consider why the concept of ‘talent’ is important for organisations before reviewing the ‘definitions’ of talent.

2.2.1. Origins of the term ‘Talent’ and Its development

Tansley (2011, p. 267) states that “*the word talent is more than thousands years old*”; and further noted that it has various interpretation and identification which are all dependent on time, people, and locality. Therefore, to better understand the concept of ‘talent’ one needs to trace how the concept has evolved over time. Thus in ancient times and in the Western context, ‘talent’ generally referred to the amount or unit of weight or money. This narrative originated from the ancient Greek word ‘*talanton*’ meaning ‘*balance*’ or ‘*weight*’. The Latin language then borrowed it as ‘*talentum*’, and used it metaphorically to denote ‘mental inclination’ (Ayto, 2005). By contrast, in the Eastern context, for example, Japan, the equivalent term for talent in Japanese was ‘*saino*’ meaning ‘*ability and skill or accomplishment.*’ Tansley (2011) views talent as an accomplishment acquired (or developed) to attain perfection (Tansley, 2011).

The view of '*talent*' as combinations of '*mental inclination*' and '*talanton*' ('*balance*' or '*weight*' of money) is also demonstrated when the word is used in the parable of talents. In the parable (Matthew 25:14-30), the master gave his servants talents (or money) based on their ability, in which two of them invested wisely and thus earned them interest and also their master's approval; while the other less enterprising servant simply buried his talent. According to Tansley (2011) the word '*talent*' was a synonym to the word '*capital*' when the parable was translated from the Greek language to English. This led to the word 'human capital' and 'talent' becoming synonymous within the world of management.

In the thirteenth century talent was more focused on '*inclination*' or '*disposition*.' According to Gallardo-Gallardo et al (2013) talent was viewed as the inherent interest of individuals to do something, or the inherent qualities and characteristics of individuals. Accordingly, they suggested that talent could be either viewed from '*subject*' (talent as natural ability, talent as a commitment, etc.) or from the '*object*' (talent as all people, talent as some people, etc.) approach. This is in-line with the old French word of talent which viewed talent as '*will*' or '*desire*', therefore, it can be argued that talent used in the thirteenth century laid the background of the meaning of talent used today only with more aspects such as competence and contribution added.

From the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, talent meant a person's mental ability or particular special abilities or attitudes (otherwise gifted talent). According to this view, this gift was a gift from God and although this was a gift from God, this gift could be 'improved' (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013) which implies that there was a big element of learning or acquired skill involved. During this time, talent referred to the individual's 'aptitude or ability'; the focus was on the competencies of individual and thus competence was very important.

By the nineteenth century when there was a more agreed definition of talent the concept began to be 'exported' into the domain of management and thus became linked to human resource management (HRM). The issue of talent had become more pronounced and as a result, the McKinsey Consultancy Company coined the phrase '*war for talent*' due to the general lack of talent in the workforce. Here talent referred to high potential workers who

can contribute to high performance; and thus the business success (Michaels et al, 2001). To achieve high performance, Ulrich and Smallwood (2012) note that this entails ‘competence x commitment x contribution.’

It is clear that across the period of history examined, the meaning of the concept of talent has developed (see Figure 2.1 below). However, there is no consensus in using this term, with its interpretation and identification dependent on time, people, and place. For example, Tansley (2011, p. 266) argued “...*there is no single or universal contemporary definition of talent in any one language.*” Part of the issue here has to do with the development of the concept of talent in that talent can be viewed either as ‘natural ability’ or ‘mastery’ or a combination of both. Another closely related debate or confusion is whether talent is ‘transferable or context dependent’, and whether it is ‘some workers or all workers’? These issues will be discussed in Section 2.2.4 below.

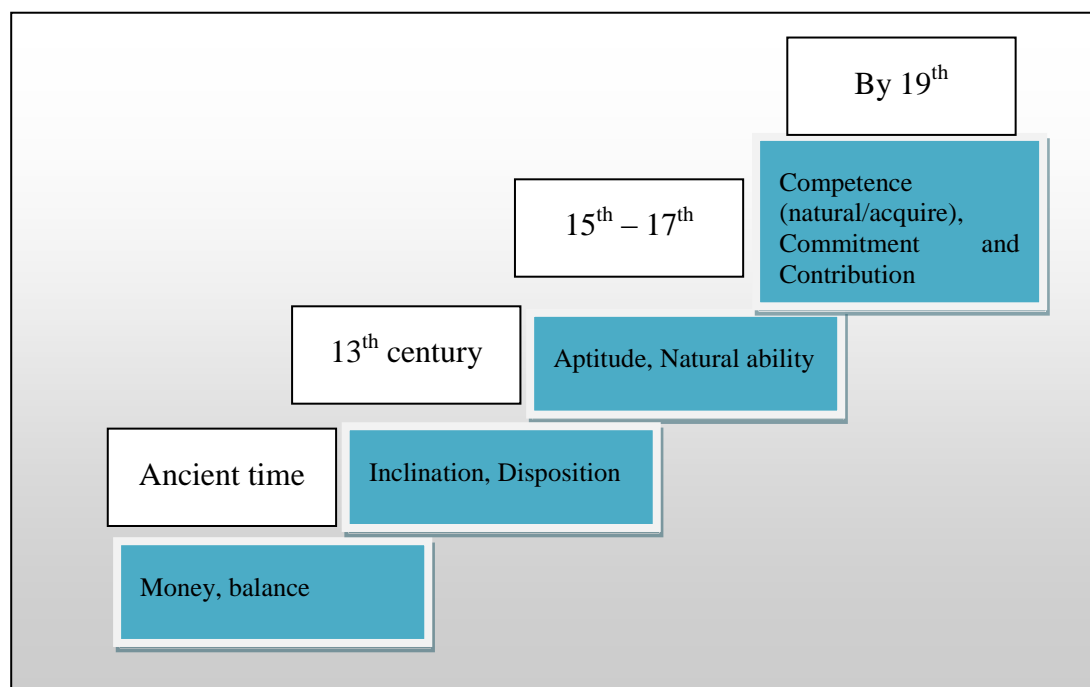


Figure 2.1 Development of the word talent: Ancient time, 13th, 15th-17th and 19th

Given the above discussion about the evolution of the concept of ‘talent’, the question therefore becomes ‘What are talented workers in the 21st Century?’ The 15th century debate implied that Talent was an ‘aptitude’, an ‘ability’, etc. Before attempting to answer the questions posed above and a few other questions that might arise thereof, we

will initially explore the different definitions of ‘Talent’ in business and management. Thus, Sections 2.2.2 & 2.2.3 will consider why the concept of ‘talent’ is important for organisations before reviewing the ‘definitions’ of talent, respectively.

2.2.2. Why Organisations need talent?

Since the coinage of the phrase ‘the war for talent’ by the McKinsey Consultancy Company, there has been a lot of focus on the concept of ‘talent’ by both practitioners and researchers (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Iles, Chuai, & Preece et al., 2010; Iles, Preece, & Chuai, 2010; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Lynton & Beechler, 2012). Part of the reason for this intense focus on talent is due to the fact that it is one of the most important resources with regards to organisational success (He, Li, & Keung Lai, 2011; Huselid, Beatty, & Becker, 2005). Goffee and Jones (2007) suggested that talented workers are able to combine their potential (good ideas, knowledge, and skills) and other resources that the organisation provides, in order to create ‘added value for the organisation’. Similarly, Lawler (2005, p. 5) noted that “*the right talent is the fundamental building block when it comes to creating an organisation capable of innovating and changing and using this as a source of competitive advantage*”. Thus, having the right talent at the right position can greatly contribute to the business success. This view is also supported by Michaels et al., (2001) who argues that organisations should be more focused on ‘A’ players who are believed to contribute greatly to organisation performance, and within the same vein encourages organisations to terminate the contracts of ‘C’ players whose contribution to performance is low. Furthermore, Goleman (2006) argued that ‘*talent*’ adds value to the organisation; and it has been estimated that it could be as high as ten times more than co-workers could. Meanwhile, Lunn (1992, p. 46) argued that managers with different levels of talent contribute to organisation profit differently — high talent increases profit by approximately 37 per cent, while average talent increases it by 4 per cent, and finally low talent decreases it by approximately 7.6 per cent.

In fact the contributions and benefits of talent are not merely limited to profit generation but rather they spill over to other tasks as well. Thus, for example, Lunn (1992, p. 13) indicated that they also performed much better than average workers in different tasks —

low complexity at 52 per cent better than average; medium complexity at 85 per cent better than average; and in high complexity task at 127 per cent better than average.

From the above discussion, it is clear that talent is an important driver of business success, and this explains why organisations fight for the best talent (*'war for talent'*). Dries (2013, p. 273) concluded that the *'war for talent'* is rooted in two main assumptions that:

- The knowledge economy based traditional source of competitive advantage is losing its edge, whereas the human talent source is a renewable resource and cannot be easily copied or stolen by competitors;
- Attracting and retaining talented people is becoming increasingly difficult, mainly due to demographic trends. For example, in the Western countries, the problem is that there are fewer younger workers, and this has been attributed to the quality of education (hence, quality of workforce) not meeting the requirements of the employers. In contrast, in Eastern countries, such as Thailand, there is an oversupply of young workers; but these lack experience and education to fill key role.

Therefore, we conclude that talent is one of the most important resources for organisations. As observed, *"without better talent, most of the other actions (performed by organisations) would not have been successful"* (Lewis & Heckman, 2006, p. 142).

2.2.3. How the concept of talent is defined in Business and Management?

Given the above discussion about the evolution of the concept of 'talent', the question therefore, becomes 'What are talented workers in the 21st Century?' The 15th century debate implied that Talent was an 'aptitude', an 'ability', etc. Before attempting to answer the questions posed above and a few other questions that might arise thereof, we will initially explore the different definitions of 'Talent' in business and management.

The McKinsey consultancy company introduced the phrase 'war for talent', and essentially brought the concept of 'talent' to the forefront of the domain of business and management. This was due to the shortage of talent, and they thus defined talent as '...

the sum of an individual's abilities, their intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence judgment, attitude, character and drive' (Michaels et al., 2001, p. xiii). Talent also includes a person's ability to learn and grow. Their view was that talent refers to the best and the brightest top 10-20 per cent of employees (Michaels et al, 2001) or the top 25 per cent according to Chabault, Hulin, and Soparnot (2012). There are many different definitions of talent, and Table 2.3 provides a list of examples of the different definitions of talent.

Author	Talent Definition
Lunn (1992, p. 25)	An individual who can use their capacity to achieve a near perfect performance
Michaels et al. (2001, p. xiii)	<i>'sum of an individual's abilities, their intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence judgment, attitude, character and drive'</i>
Huselid et al. (2005, p.112)	'A' players or high performers who engage in work that's essential to company strategy
Morton and Ashton (2005, p. 29)	Executive management team leaders, directors, and A-player managers in all functions – plus 'B'-players as potentials Future business leaders with more strategic capabilities than just operational excellence skills – plus specialist talent able to execute business integration projects on time and to budget
CIPD (2007, p. 3)	Talent consists of those individuals who can make a difference to organisation performance, either through their immediate contribution or in the longer term by demonstrating the highest levels of potential.
Poowittayapan (2007)	Talented worker can be distinguished into two types: -Individuals who are gifted, or have innate abilities. It is not just the knowledge and skills which can be developed. It is the attributes, including self-concept, traits, and motivations. These can contribute the output or out come on the work performance. -The individuals who can contribute high performance and at the same time having good relationship with the colleague or co-workers. Moreover, they can be the role model in the organisation in term of work performance; as the result produce valuable outcomes.
Tansley et al. (2007, p. 8)	<i>"Individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance, either through their immediate contribution or in the longer-term by demonstrating the highest levels of potential."</i>
Cheese et al. (2008, p. 46)	<i>"The total of all the experience, knowledge, skills, and behaviours that a person has and brings to work."</i>
Lehmann (2009, p.157)	Workers not only possess formal qualifications obtained from education but also hold a set of competencies, which are highly personal and difficult to describe precisely. In other words, they have talent – talent to bring needed expertise and ideas to corporations, and talent to learn and execute new processes to prepare for changes
Lewis and Heckman (2009, p. 141)	1. T talent (high performance and potential) as an unqualified good and resource, which has to be managed according to performance levels...according to specific role or organisational needs. 2. Classify employees according to performance levels ('A', 'B', 'C' level to denote top, competent, and bottom performer, respectively) organisations are encouraged to manage performance pools of talent generally rather than succession pools for specific jobs.
Silzer and Dowell (2010, pp. 13-14)	-Individual: talented worker is <i>"an individual's skills and abilities and what the person is capable of doing"</i> -In groups: talented worker is <i>"a pool of employees who are exceptional in their skills and abilities either in a specific technical area (such as software graphics skills) or a competency (such a consumer marketing talent), or a more general area"</i>

Author	Talent Definition
	<i>(such as general managers or high-potential talent). And in some cases, it might refer to the entire employee population.”</i>
Silzer and Dowel (2010 p. 75)	<i>“Talent refers to those individuals and groups with the strategic competencies that enable a company to achieve its short - and long - term goals. They exhibit the competencies that will add the most value to customers and in doing so, help to differentiate the organisation from its competition”</i>
Berger and Berger (2011, p. 4)	Talented workers (or super-keepers) are <i>“a small group of individuals, about 3% of the organisation’s employees, who can inspire others to attain superior accomplishment and embody the creed, core competencies, and values of their organization”</i>
Ulrich and Smallwood (2012, p. 60)	Formula of talented workers is “talented workers = competence × commitment × contribution, next generation of talented worker is competent (able to do the work) and committed (willing to do the work), but unless they are making a real contribution (finding meaning and purpose in their work)”
Dries (2013, pp. 278-280) and Thunnissen and Arensbergen (2015, pp. 182-183)	1. Objective (characteristics) vs. subject (people) — Can these be isolated from each other? 2. Inclusive vs. exclusive approach — Is talent an inclusive (all workers) or exclusive (some workers) concept? 3. Talent as innate vs. acquired ability 4. Talent as input vs. output approaches 5. Talent as transferable vs. context-dependent skill
Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013, p. 297)	1. Object approach (characteristic of people) — talent is conceptualised as exceptional abilities and attitudes demonstrated by an individual... (i.e., talent as natural ability, talent as mastery, talent as commitment, and talent as fit). 2. Subject approach (people) — exclusive (e.g. high performers, high potentials) vs. inclusive (all employees)
Mallick and Saini (2013)	Entrepreneurial talent is the combination of abilities, traits, and dispositions that enable a person to mobilise capital to start and operate a new business at his own personal risk in the face of uncertainty.
Uygunlamasi (2014, p. 6236)	Talent consists of: information, capabilities, experiences, intelligences, judgments, attitudes, characters and motivations of people

Table 2.1: Definitions of Talent in Business and Management

These definitions of ‘talent’ are wide ranging, and some of the general themes include people *“who show potential in the company; namely the leadership, top performers, employees with leadership potential, and employees in “pivotal roles”*. Thus for example, D’Annunzio-Green (2008, p. 810) argued that talented workers are high potential and high performance workers who are identified as promotable and have talent, that is, people with talent that organisation values at all levels. D’Annunzio-Green (2008, p.810) further argue that these people have specific skills or knowledge or possess special expertise, which differentiates them from other employees and makes it hard to replace them. This point-of-view is also propounded by Stahl et al. (2012, p. 4) who contended that ‘talent’ relates to *“a select group of employees – those that rank at the top in terms of capability and performance – rather than the entire workforce.”*

Meanwhile, Bethke-Langenegger (2012) appears to be more focused on ‘talent’ within the context of management. Accordingly, he argues that;

“...we understand talent to be one of those workers who ensure the competitiveness and future of a company (as specialist or leader) through their organisational/job specific qualification and knowledge, his social and methodical competencies, and his characteristic attributes such as eager to learn or achievement oriented” (p. 3).

Williams (2000, p. 35) echoed this view, and described talent as:

“...a person who regularly demonstrate exceptional ability and achievement over a range of activities and situations...; and those who consistently indicate high competence in areas of activity that strongly suggest transferability...”

Thus according to Williams (2000, p. 35), talent is not just the natural gift, skill, or knowledge; but a combination of practice and motivation of the individual (Abbott & Collins, 2002; Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998). The combination of practice and motivation include such things as a strategic mind, leadership ability, emotional maturity, and communications skills.

Additionally, Berger and Berger (2011) defines talent as a “super-keeper”, and this is based on a classification of employees according to their potential and value to organisation. The super-keepers are a very small group of individuals, who have demonstrated superior accomplishments, and have inspired others to attain superior accomplishments. They embody the core competencies and values of the organisation. A loss or absence of such employees will severely retard organisation growth because of their disproportionately powerful impact on current and future organisational performance. Robertson and Abbey (2003) view talent as the potential and realised capacities of individuals and groups and how they are organised. This includes those within the organisation and those outside. For future business success, talent is the most important corporate resource, because those with talents are smart, sophisticated, technologically literate, globally astute, and operationally agile (Fishman, 1998, p. 104). Ready, Conger, and Hill (2010) gave another notion of talent when referring to them as high potential and thus able to deliver strong results, and also master new type of work quickly.

Besides ‘talent’ in general, other researchers have focused on managerial talent, defined as a person who possesses the combination of having a strategic mind, leadership ability, emotional maturity, and communications skills. Furthermore, a person with managerial talent has the ability to attract and inspire other colleagues or subordinates, has entrepreneurial instincts, functional skills, and the ability to deliver results (Michaels et al., 2001). Additionally, Preece, Iles, and Chuai (2011) argue that ‘talent’ should possess the ability to create, acquire, transfer and apply knowledge.

Thus, ‘talented workers’ should be able to create value and contribute above average values to their work place, which helps organisations to gain short-term and long-term success (Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010; Tansley et al., 2006). Consequently; Fishman (1998) and Lawler (2005) argue that for future business success, talented workers are the most important resource. This is due to the fact talented workers are smart, sophisticated, globally astute, and operationally agile. Ready et al. (2010) gave another notion of talented workers, identifying them as ‘high potential’ with an ability to deliver strong results, and learn new types of work quickly. It can be concluded that the term ‘talented workers’ refers to the individuals with high potential at all levels of the organisation who have the motivation to perform and they can influence their counterparts as role models, which will lead to business success.

Since talented workers are vital to business success, individual organisations should have clear and specific definitions of ‘talented workers’. Research conducted by the Tower Perrin Consultancy Company indicated that 87% of their respondents used the term ‘talent’ to identify employees but none of them used the same definition. The research also concluded that the definition of talent should be dependent on the organisation’s business strategy, type of firm, the overall competitive environment, etc. (Iles, Chuai, & Preece et al., 2010; Tansley, 2011). Tansley (2011) also found that there was no single universal contemporary definition of talented people, which strengthens the observation that there is no term that sufficiently describe talent and a lack of consensus (Gelens et al., 2013; Iles, 2013; Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010; Tansley et al., 2013; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012). Thus in this research, we will explore how the hotels identify their talented workers in this industry.

In conclusion, it is noted that the term ‘talent’ refers to the individuals with high potential, in key positions of the organisation are motivated to perform and can influence their counterparts as role models, which will lead to business success. Since, talented workers are vital to business success, individual organisations should have clear and specific definitions of ‘talented workers’. This ensures that they can recruit and retain ‘precious individuals’ who can create value, and contribute above average value to their work place, and thus lead to organisation success in the short-term and long-term (Gallardo-Gallardo, 2013; Iles, 2008a; Tansley, 2011; Tansley et al., 2007).

The research conducted by the Tower Perrin Consultancy Company drew very interesting conclusions when noting that 87% of their respondents used the word ‘talent’ to identify employees but that also none of them used the same definition. The research also concluded that the definition of talent should be dependent on the organisation’s business strategy, type of firm, the overall competitive environment, etc. (Iles, Chuai, et al., 2010). The research also affirmed the view of Tansley (2011) that there is no single universal contemporary definition of talented people (Tansley (2011). This leads to a lack of universal definition of talented workers, and as result each organisation will need to work towards understanding the specific talented workers profile that fits best with their culture and structure (D'Annunzio-Green, 2008, p. 809). This also has the added danger that there will be a lack of ‘industry-wide’ drive towards ‘universal standards and training’. Consequently, many organisations today might invest resources in describing the behaviours that they would like to encourage in talented workers but these will vary from organisation to organisation.

From the ensuing discussion, an interesting observation from all the definitions is the fact that there appear to be no common agreement on what ‘talent’ is? These wide variations in definitions lead to the following questions - “does talent refers to people (subject) or to the characteristics of people (object)? Is talent more about performance, potential, competence, or commitment? Is talent a natural ability or does it relate more to mastery through practice? Is it better to take an inclusive or an exclusive approach to talent management?” (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013, p.291). Furthermore, should we include all employees in the hotel as talent or not? If not, who should we include and why?

Therefore, while discussing the question of who are ‘talented workers’, four aspects are considered. These aspects are discussed in turn below.

2.2.4. How to Identify Talent?

Shortages of talent has become one of the world’s more pressing issues in the business and management domain, and this is usually coupled with confusion about the concept of talent. Lewis and Heckman (2006, p. 140) noted that the vague meaning of the concept of talent in business and management “... *confuses outcomes with processes, and with decision alternatives.*” Recently, researchers such as Tansley (2011) and Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) have made a great contribution to the definition of talent in the business area, aimed at avoiding this confusion. Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013, p. 292), thus noted that in the 13th century talent was viewed as the feeling that makes a person want to do something or the natural qualities of a person’s character. In this regard, talent can be viewed as an ‘object’ or talent as natural ability, talent as a commitment, etc. as opposed to ‘talent’ as a ‘subject’ or talent as all people, talent as some people, etc. In the ‘object approach’ talent is viewed as the characteristic that people possess such as natural talent, commitment to work etc., while in the subject approach talent is viewed as people in the organisation. With acknowledgement of these great contributions to the study of the concept talent, this research will borrow their contributions in investigating talent within the domain of the hospitality industry.

Generally, talent workers are accepted as those individuals who give direct contribution to the business strategy and goal, and also assist the organisation to stay competitive (e.g. Bethke-Langenegger, 2012; He et al, 2011; Huselid et al 2005; Michaels et al, 2001; Phillips & Roper, 2009). In the subsections below, the discussion on how talent is identified is explored in more detail.

In defining ‘talent’ it is almost inevitable that organisations would also concentrate on the qualities that are needed from potential workers, and these qualities are likely to be the ones that set ‘talented workers’ apart from other workers. These qualities would vary widely from industry to industry, and indeed Tansley (2011) observes that there are a number of ways of identifying talent e.g. talent as natural ability, and talent as high

performance. Therefore, it is not easy to choose one over the other. In this thesis some of these aspects on the nature of ‘talent’ will be discussed. Therefore, the question is whether talent within the context of the hospitality industry should be modelled based on talent as natural vs. acquired ability; talent as all vs. some workers; talent as transferable vs. context dependent; and also the qualities needed of a ‘talented worker.’ These aspects are explored in detail below.

2.2.4.1. Talent as ‘natural ability’ or ‘mastery’/versus acquired ability

Part of the issue in defining and identifying talent emanates from the development of the word talent. Talent can either be viewed from ‘a natural ability’ or ‘mastery’ point of view. The interpretation of the term talent differs according to different areas (Tansley, 2011, p. 267) and also a debate about the role of nature versus nurture in talent development. This is more so within the context of businesses and therefore not surprising that Tansley (2011) noted that it is important to have a clear definition of talent, as this will help the business to align their workforce with the business strategy and as a result meet the business objectives.

The debate about talent has long centred on whether talent is innate meaning a natural gift, and genetic or acquired meaning nurture. For example, research by Meyers, van Woerkom, and Dries (2013) and Howe et al. (1998) have focussed on this debate. On one side of the debate are those who argue that ‘talent’ is a natural ability or inborn trait and at the other extreme are those who argue that ‘talent’ can be taught and acquired through learning.

Examples of advocates of talent as a ‘learnt skill’ include Csikszentmihalyi (1998); Gagné (2004); Gallardo-Gallardo et al (2013); and Iles (2013) (See also Figure 2.2). Thus, for example, Gagné (1999) contends that talent emerges from learning, and is thus a mastery of a skill that is developed through practice (cited in Iles, 2013, p. 301). Professor John A. Sloboda of the University of Keele pointed out that “*there is absolutely no evidence of a fast track for high achievers*” (Colvin, 2008, p. 19). Gagné (1999) further made the point clear by arguing that ‘talent’ is a mastery; that it is systematically developed skills or training) rather than mere ability (cited in Iles, 2013).

Csikszentmihalyi (1998, p. 411) points out that “...*talent is not an all-or-nothing gift but a potential that needs to be cultivated.*” This idea is similar to the definition of talent in Eastern countries such as Japan, in which the equivalent term to talent is ‘saino’ meaning an ability, skills and accomplishment (Tansley, 2011), which implies that ‘talent’ can be acquired and developed.

Meanwhile, the advocates of the view of talent as a natural ability generally view talent as a natural skill or natural gift (Lunn, 1992; Mosing, Madison, Pedersen, Kuja-Halkola, & Ullén, 2014). Innate talents are more associated with some particular fields (Tansley, 2011). Examples of such fields include art, music, sport, and composers (Colvin, 2008). This view assumes that ‘talent’ in the main cannot be taught, and thus for example Lunn (1992) argues that the spontaneous behaviour of talent is a natural ability and not primarily acquired through effort. This view is also notable in the English language and other European languages such as German, Russian, French and Danish that:

“...*talent is an innate giftedness that manifests itself in a particular field of endeavour and is linked to outstanding performance in some way. So, an innate quality or ability is one that you are ‘born with’, not one you have learned*” (Tansley, 2011, p. 267).

Tansley (2011, p. 267), further commented that this view of talent as ‘gift’ is suited to describing talent in particular jobs in which that “...*gift enables someone to achieve a conspicuously exceptional or above-average performance in a particular field, especially in the arts.*”

Thus, Iles (2013) also attempted to reinforce the notion that there are differences in the nature versus nurture debates when he commented that “...*talent as natural ability is where talent are inborn (gifted or innate)*” as opposed to talent as the mastery in which there is a systematic development of skills or knowledge. He concluded that combinations of both are extremely useful for producing well rounded individuals, and consequently noted that it has to be “...*the responsibility of managers to support those with high ability to be a success by providing appropriate supportive environments.*”

The nature versus nurture debate about the development of 'talent' could be more a function of the field of study that the debate is taking place. This is because 'talent' has different interpretations that appear to be 'subject area specific', the concept of talent has been applied in different fields, e.g. sports, academia, music, etc. Within the field of business and management, we would assume that talent refers to an individual who has natural talent or innate ability + opportunities/environment + training + commitment + contribution to work. This is supported by Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) who recommended an object approach to defining talent, in combination with their characteristics (abilities and attitudes demonstrated by individual) = natural ability + mastery + fit. This line of thought is essentially the middle view, or the voice of reason, in the nature versus nurture debate. This is because it argues that talent it is not just the natural gift, but more than that, it is also a combination of practice and motivation, for individuals to fulfil their potential (Abbott & Collins, 2002; Howe et al., 1998; Meyers et al., 2013).

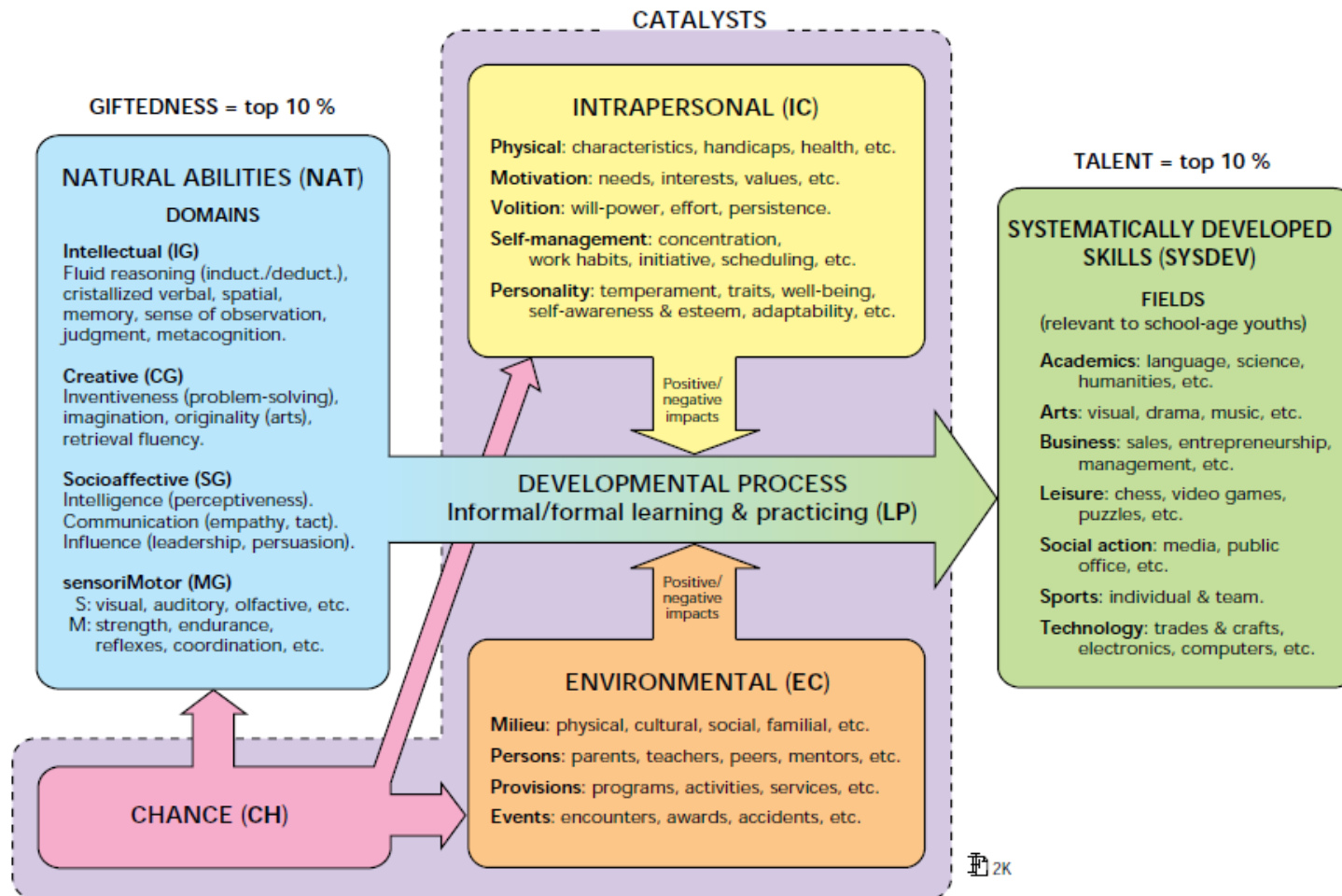


Figure 2.2: Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent
(Source: Gagné ; 2004, p.121)

In conclusion, that whilst there has been considerable debate about the role of nature versus nurture in talent development for purposes of this thesis the debate on whether talent arises due to nature or nurture is mute. This research is not concerned about how talent has arisen. In fact, the research takes the view that talent it is not just the natural gift or skill, but more than that, it is also a combination of practice and motivation (Abbott & Collins, 2002; Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Gagné, 2004; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Howe et al., 1998). In addition to the above, it is argued here that we also need the 3 Cs qualities which are *Competence, Commitment, and Contribution* (discussed in detail in Section 2.3.4.4) which were suggested by Ulrich and Smallwood (2012, p.60). These qualities arise due to ‘natural ability + mastery + fit’ (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013).

2.2.4.2. Talent: ‘All people’ or ‘Some people’?

Another important issue within this area is whether ‘talent’ refers to ‘some people’ or ‘some workers’ or ‘all people’ or ‘all workers’? To fully understand the qualities that workers bring to the organisation, it is important for organisations to look at who is talent in the organisation (Stahl et al, 2012).

Gallardo-Gallardo et al (2013) argued that in the object approach (or those characteristics of people) talent is conceptualised as exceptional abilities and attitudes demonstrated by an individual i.e., talent as natural ability, talent as mastery, talent as commitment, and talent as fit. The subject approach focuses on people be it exclusive for example high performers and high potentials or inclusive for example all employees. The object approach is discussed in Section 2.2.4.4. Below, the focus is on the qualities of talent. Meanwhile, in this section, we focus on the subject approach, and specifically on questions that might arise when adopting the subject approach.

Thus, if the subject approach is adopted, the question therefore is whether all or some of the workers can be viewed as ‘talent’? Furthermore, how would adopting a particular definition and viewpoint of talent influence the strategies adopted by the research respondents/participants in managing talent in the hospitality industry. The researcher

aims to get answers to this question during the fieldwork (through the use of interviews, observations and documentation).

The debate on who should be included as part of ‘talent’ offers contrasting standpoints. There are those who advocate focusing on certain grades or skills within the business as constituting ‘talent’. As an example, one view is expressed by Davies et al. (2007, p.2) who argues that talent should not be restricted to particular grades or area of responsibility, and thus contends that it appears at all work levels and in all functions. By contrast, McDonnell and Collings (2011) argued that ‘talent management’, and by implication ‘talent’ as well, should be focused, rather than including every employee in the organisation.

Focusing on highly skilled or business critical positions is referred to as the ‘differentiated approach limited to high-potential employees’, in contrast to the non-differentiated approach or inclusive approach, in which all employees are available (Al Ariss et al., 2014). It is argued that there has been a change in the views on who should be regarded as ‘talent in organisation’. Whereas in the past talent referred more to all workers; in the more recent talent has tended to be more focused on some people. Therefore, the recent trend has been to focus on those who can deliver the best contribution to the organisation rather than all workers. Table 2.2 illustrates the change in talent ethics and contrasts these points of view.

Old Talent Ethic	New Talent Ethic
We invest in all our people equally.	Some people are more talented and perform much better than others perform, and we invest in term accordingly.
We give best performers a little more money than average performance.	We give best performers a lot more money.
I know he is a ‘C’ player, but we have to be fair to him—he has been working for long time.	We have to be fair to the twenty people working under ‘C’ player.
Managers do not need pats on the back.	Managers, like everyone else, need to know they are valued.
Ethical managers do not talk about others behind their backs.	Managers have a responsibility to discuss with the people in their organisation
Undifferentiated praise motivates the masses.	Differentiated drives individual and company performance.

Table 2.2: Change in Talent Ethic (Source: Michaels et al, 2001, p. 130)

The idea that ‘talent’ refers to certain grades or positions is also posited by Beechler and Woodward (2009, p. 273) in research entitled ‘The global war for talent’. In this research article, the authors figuratively discuss about the sinking ‘corporate ship’, and argue that in that scenario “...*the deckhands, cooks and cabin boys are cast into the waves ...meanwhile; the captain orders life-rafts to be prepared for those whose lives cannot be sacrificed*”. In this example the workers’ who cannot be sacrificed are the high performers. This position would therefore entail adopting a differentiated approach to defining and identifying ‘talent’. The notion that ‘talent’ is about performance is also contained in a report by the Towers Perrin consultancy company who concluded that “...*top performers are critical for the business success*” (Towers Perrin, 2009).

Figure 2.3 also illustrates an example of the differentiated approach to ‘talent’ definition. In this regard, talent implies that these workers are top performers, high potentials, senior managers and/or people suitable for critical roles in the organisation (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012, p. 56).

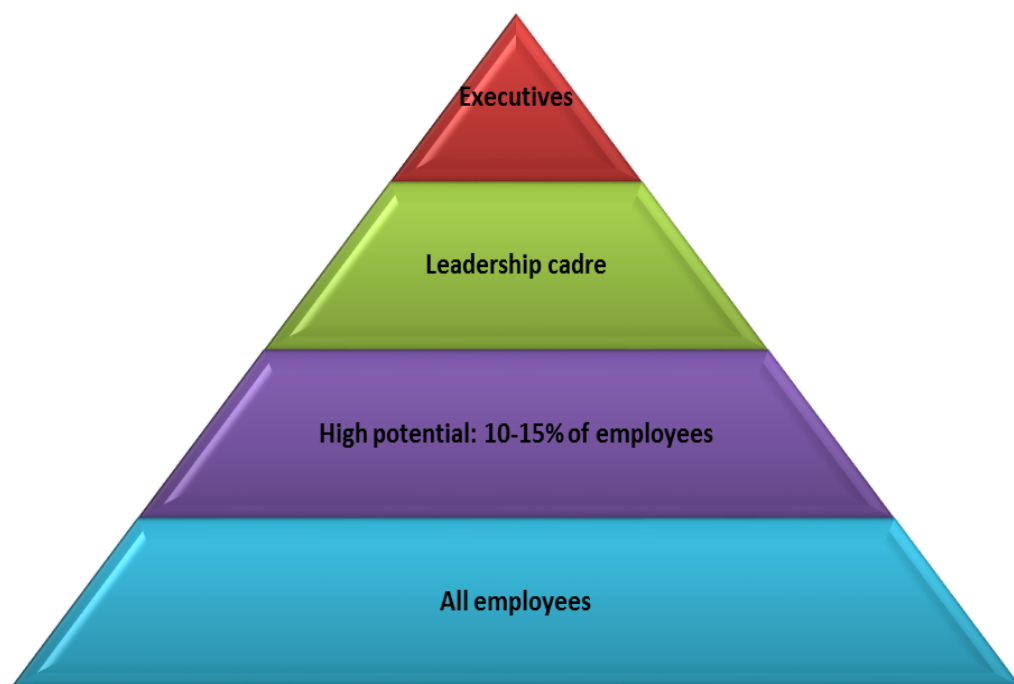


Figure 2.3: Differentiated Approach to Talent in an Organisation

(Adapted from Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012, p. 56)

The idea of talent as being some workers is further illustrated by Michaels et al. (2001) who argue that talent refers to the best and the brightest top 10-20 per cent of employees, or the top 25 per cent according to Chabault et al. (2012). Similarly, Stahl et al. (2012, p. 4) contends that ‘talent’ relates to “...*a select group of employees — those that rank at the top in terms of capability and performance – rather than the entire workforce*”, talent is accordingly classified and based on their performance (Huselid et al., 2005; Michaels et al., 2001, p. 127). Huselid et al. (2005) described talent as ‘A’ players (key positions) who have to be harnessed by the organisation so as to be successful. Meanwhile, Michaels et al. (2001, p. 127) categorised performance into 3 levels. An ‘A’ player refers to individuals who keep the standard by consistently contributing exceptional performance and more so inspiring and motivating colleagues/co-workers. At a lower level, ‘B’ players are those workers who meet expectations of the organisation but who may have limited upward mobility. Finally, ‘C’ players are positioned at the lowest level, because their contribution is barely acceptable.

Blass (2007, p. 7) observed that managing talent “*is about doing something additional or different with those people who are defined as talent for the purpose of the organisation*”. However, therein lies the danger with adopting the differentiated approach to ‘talent’ definition, in that the rest of the other workforce might be perceived as being ‘talentless’ and therefore feel as if they do not belong to the organisation. We further note that a survey of UK managers found that 84% “...*want to be considered as high potential and those who know that the organisation consider to be talented/high potential are significantly more motivated by their career and the direction of the organisation*” (Blass, 2007, p. 7). However, what is not clear from this report is how many of the ‘rest of the workforce’ are not motivated and clear about their career due to them not being given the same guidance or ‘tag’ as the ‘talent’. Thus while it seems to be more than beneficial for organisations to identify talent as talent, they need to be also aware of the feedback of some people who are not included in the criteria of talent.

From the discussion above, it appears that talent referred more to some workers (differentiated approach) rather than all workers (inclusive approach) (e.g. Huselid et al, 2005; Blass, 2007; Michaels et al, 2001). This is supported by Huselid et al. (2005) who classify talent into different levels (‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’); and with Michaels et al. (2001) being

more focused on the ‘A players’ who are believed to contribute to organisation performance. In a demonstration of ruthlessness, Michaels et al. (2001) further urges organisations to terminate the contracts of ‘C’ players whose contribution to performance is low.

2.2.4.3. Talent: Transferability versus Context Dependent

In the previous sections, we focused on the ‘nature’ versus ‘nurture’ debate, and also on the ‘some versus all workers’ debates regarding the nature of talent. This section focuses on whether the performance of talent is ‘transferable’ to or ‘dependent on the context’.

The idea of transferability of talent originated from research into sports. The idea is that someone who does sport ‘A’ can be trained for sport ‘B’, because both sports need similar basic characteristics (Meyers & Woerkom van, 2014). Talent from this perspective is believed to be transferability of knowledge, skills, and ability. An example of research by Rapport, Bancroft, and Okum (2003) indicated that because of talent shortage, organisations have to search through ‘unusual’ groups, which for their study, was the aging workforce, and in this case elderly aircraft technicians trained to be hospital radiation technicians as they share similar skills and ability. Transferable skills and abilities give the flexibility of recruiting talent, who have specialised in other similar domains, into the current organisation, into a job role, and expect that they can apply their talent across the contexts. Interestingly the notion of talent as transferable across the context originates from studies by Williams (2000, p. 35), in which talent was defined as:

“...those who consistently indicate high competence in areas of activity that strongly suggest transferable, comparable ability in situations where they have yet to be tested and proved to be highly effective.”

More importantly, effective transferability is dependent on conditions in the new context and the attitude of talented individuals (Meyers & Woerkom van, 2014; Silzer & Church, 2009; Stahl et al., 2012). Silzer and Church (2009) indicated that the potential of talent could apply to several areas of work as long as the conditions in the new working

area is appropriate (Silzer & Church, 2009) and therefore ‘organisational fit’ and ‘talent’s value’ are vital (Stahl et al., 2012).

The contradictory view is that talent is not transferable at all. The view is that organisations should be aware of the dangers of choosing the best performers from other organisations, as they may fail to transfer that previous performance to the ‘new’ employer organisation. According to this view, the ability to transfer skills may be limited. For example, research by Groysberg, McLean, and Nohria (2006, p. 92) indicated that companies hire new Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) for talent generators like GE Motor Company, and they noted in the long term some of these executives may not deliver, mainly due to their inability to transfer skills into the challenges of the new environment. The research also found that their performance declines by nearly 50% when they changed employers. Furthermore, their performance falls by an average of 20% and it often takes up to 5 years for their performance to return to the levels evident before the move (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013, p. 1768). Similarly, Groysberg, Lee, and Nanda (2008) also concluded that the performance of individuals is dependent on organisation-specific skills and capabilities. Thus for example, when individuals move to lower capacity level jobs within the organisation then their performance decreases by 5 years. However, if they move to the same level in the new organisation then their performance only declines for 2 years on average.

The discussion above leads to questions about whether the abilities and skills of talent are transferable. It can be concluded here that the ability and skills of talent can be transferred under appropriate environmental contexts, and this is in accordance with the ‘person-environment fit’ theory. The theory notes that talent has to match the organisation’s culture, strategy, and management policy (Caplan, 1987). Furthermore, talent should feel ‘valued’ and settled in the organisation (Meyers & Woerkom van, 2014; Silzer & Church, 2009; Stahl et al., 2012).

Therefore, it is still not quite clear whether talent can be transferred or not across organisations or contexts. This thesis will thus investigate whether talent within the context of the hospitality industry is viewed as transferable by the participating hotels or

not? This will help the hotels to consider whether the organisations should buy or build talent in the organisations.

2.2.4.4. Talent Qualities

Boudreau and Ramstad (2007, p. 2) argued that talent comprises of “*potential and realised capacities of individuals and groups and how they are organised, including within the organisation and those who might join the organisation.*” However, it is not clear from the above statement how to identify talent qualities. Therefore, Ulrich and Smallwood (2012, p.60) gave more details on the subject. They argued that talent has the following formula: ‘***Competence × Commitment × Contribution***’. The three qualities described in the formula will be discussed as follows:

- **Competence:** refers to the knowledge, skills, and values that the individual brings to their role of work (McDonnell & Collings, 2011). It has been suggested that the competencies of talent should be aligned to the business strategy; with the current and future needs of organisation, with the right skills + right place + right job + right time, being considered. However, competence cannot stand alone without having the commitment to do something, and thus both of these are considered to be the main standard elements of talent. Furthermore, those competencies have to fit with the organisational needs (Gallardo-Gallardo, 2013).
- **Commitment:** means how individuals apply their competencies, and the willingness to make the best of their ‘role of work’ within the organisation (Abbott and Collins, 2002; Gagné, 1999, 2004; Gallardo-Gallardo, 2013; Howe et al., 1998; McDonnell & Collings, 2011). Therefore, talented workers should not only possess competence and ability; but also utilise these to their best ability to contribute to organisational success. This commitment is driven by the individual’s interest, motivation, values, and attitudes.
- **Contribution:** refers to the personal and value outcome from competency and commitment that the individual has put into their role (McDonnell & Collings, 2011). The contribution of talent is the value brought to the organisation

through hiring individuals with the right competence and ability combination in the right position at the right time (Gallardo-Gallardo et al, 2013; Huselid et al., 2005). Tansley (2011) also notes that talent is specific to different organisations, is influenced by the type of industry and the nature of the particular work.

Whilst these qualities have been discussed individually, it must be noted that the formula of ‘talent’ as espoused by Ulrich and Smallwood (2012, p.60) indicates that it is the combined effect of these qualities which are more important than the individual qualities. Thus, competence and commitment will have no meaning without the real contribution to the organisational success which McDonnell & Collings (2011) regarded as an employees’ output; while at the same time employees per se should find that what they are working for is meaningful and valuable for them.

The characteristics required of ‘talented workers’ differs from industry to industry. Thus for example, the key characteristics of talented employees desired by the securities firms are honesty, optimism, enthusiasm, and tolerance because they have to work under pressure from both the nature of the job and the external factors (Piansoongnern, 2013, p. 109). Michaels et al. (2001) came up with the following qualities of talent of ‘A’ Players, listed in Table 2.3 below.

Dimension	Criteria
Overall talent level	Top 10% of performance/potential workers
Vision	Facilitates the creation and communication of a competing and strategically sound vision
Intelligence	130 or higher IQ; ‘a quick study’, able to rapidly perform complex analyses
Leadership	Initiates change; highly adaptive and able to sell the organisation changes
Drive	Passionate; extremely high energy level; fast paced; 55+ hour work per week
Resourcefulness	Impressive ability to find way over, under, around, and barriers; invents new paradigms
Customer focus	Extremely sensitive and adaptive to both stated and unstated customer needs
Coaching	Successfully counsels, mentors, and teaches each team member to ‘turbo-boost’ performance and personal/career growth
Team building	Creates focused, collaborative, result-driven teams; energises other.
Track record	Exceeds expectations of employees, customers and share holders
Integrity	‘ironclad’
Communication	Excellent oral/written skills

Table 2.3: Quality of Talent — ‘A’ Players

(*Source:* Michaels et al, 2001 p. 127)

In conclusion, it is noted that the hospitality industry faces the unique challenge of high turnover levels (Walsh & Taylor, 2007). This challenge of high employee turnover implies that it is even more imperative that hotels should have clear criteria for identifying, nurturing and retaining talent within its ranks, and of identifying the qualities that are important for its success. Thus, whether the organisation requires talent or not, the requirement of talent should be directly linked to the organisation’s strategy. Therefore, the organisation should be able to identify those talents who fit the organisational needs. This criterion has to be clear before the recruitment stage (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). That is, the organisation should have a clear picture of who they want to invest on before-hand and these individuals should fit with the goal of ‘staying’ competitive.

2.2.5. Talent Characteristics and Trends

There is no doubt that talents have their own unique competencies, motives, and expectations. To fully-harness the skills potential of the talented workers, organisations have to understand how they are seen as potential employers (that is, corporate image from the point-of-view of talented workers), and how this influences these talented-workers' decision about their career and where they want to work. Some of these issues of image can be managed through self-promotion; and also through recruiting, developing, and/or retaining talent. This section will therefore focus on the current trends with regards to talent.

A recent survey by Oxford Economics (2012) revealed that with regards to 'talent', currently there is more demand than supply of talent. The results of this survey affirms the view that the development of talent mismatches the needs for talent in the labour market, that is, shortage of talent. When talent is in short surplus, it leads to problems as talents know that they are 'talent' and so they think they should have privileged treatment, thus, they should be managed differently based on their capabilities. If the organisation is not offering the right job packages the 'talent' may start to lose commitment to their work, and may even end up leaving the organisation.

The characteristics of talents can be noted from their expectations of the job, such as having a high expectation of the organisation they choose to work for, which leads to job satisfaction and commitment (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002; Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001). An example is priority at workplace; that is, they want organisations to allow them to use their knowledge and skills more freely rather than following the basic working routine (Earle, 2003). Another important consideration is pay, seen as one of the most important aspects of motivating talent. For example, in an interview with an IT worker who was viewed as talent, he revealed that he kept accepting the new job offers, and the main reason was higher payment (Powell, 2012). Moreover, intrinsic motivations such as challenging opportunities, learning opportunities, etc. are also important considerations made by talent (Stokes et al., 2013).

Thorne and Pellant (2008, p. 104) concluded that in order to manage talents effectively, organisations have to understand their characteristics such as being: *“curious”, “setting themselves ambitious goals”, “working long hours and hard when interested”* but also that they can be easily distracted if the work is not challenging enough. They further commented that the needs of talent such as recognition, feeling of achieving something significant, excitement, variety, stimulation, feeling of making a difference have to be taken into consideration. The notion that talent has high expectation is also supported by Michaels et al. (2001, pp. 42-43) who conclude that:

...talented people want big money and all the perks. More important, though, they want to feel passionate about their work, excited by their jobs, enriched by their career opportunities, uplifted by the company’s leaders, assured by the depth of its management, and inspired by its sense of mission. They’ll work hard but they want to be fulfilled. If they’re not fulfilled, they’ll be inclined to leave.

From the above characterisation of talent, makes this group of talent unique. However, it also means that they know that they are talent. It can also be noted that talents have high expectations and are always ready to move to alternative workplaces whenever it is appropriate for them, hence the high turnover with Thorne and Pellant (2008) citing boredom as the main reason for them to seek new challenges. Thus, organisations have to employ effective strategy to manage those talents and ultimately aim to retain their talented workers.

So far, the literature review has discussed many aspects relating to the concept of talent like the origin of word talent, definitions of talent, identification of talent, etc. This was an attempt to lay the background of talent and why it is important for organisations to understand this concept. The conclusion drawn was that a clear understanding of the definitions and conceptualisation of the term ‘talent’ is essential for the success of organisations (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Michaels et al., 2001; Tansley, 2011; Williams, 2000); and this may-be particularly more so for the hospitality industry as it is heavily labour intensive. Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013, p. 290) noted that the lack of clarity and conceptualisation of the term ‘talent’ was also contributing to ‘conceptual confusion’ within the area of ‘Talent Management’, which is another closely related subject (see also Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Nijs et al., 2014; Thunnissen et al., 2014; Silzer & Church, 2010). In the next section, we will therefore discuss how the

concept of talent applies to the hospitality industry and also how organisations should manage these talents, with a view to increasing retention of ‘talent’.

2.3. Managing Talent

2.3.1. Talent Management (TM)

According to Davies et al. (2007, p. 2), management is the art of achieving results through the direction of people and activities. They further argue that this might be much more effective if management itself is talented and the people being managed have talent. Having suitable talent and managing that talent appropriately gives organisations the competitive advantage (He et al., 2011; Huselid et al., 2010; Phillips & Roper, 2009). During the period 2000 - 2008, most of the findings from the research on TM revealed that there is a shortage of ‘talent’ (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). This, according to the Deloitte research study of 2008 was in spite of the fact that there was high unemployment rate.

Given the foregoing discussion, especially about the general shortage of ‘talent’, the conclusions drawn are that effective management of ‘talented workers’ is not nice to have but rather an important function with many benefits. *“It is something that has to be worked for, planned and given executive attention”* (Davis et al., 2007, p. 2) and benefits that accrue to organisations that make a conscious effort to address this issue are potentially outstanding. Therefore, in this section we address how ‘talented workers’ can be managed effectively and specifically by using TM strategies. This forms the theoretical background to managing talented workers.

The reason for focusing on TM is that it is a core HR practice for managing talent and for achieving their goal (Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010). However, it has been argued that *“TM is one of the most challenging practices today mainly due to the fact that organisations are not well prepared to handle it”* (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013). Also, a report based on interviewing HR directors by Deloitte in 2005 showed the TM is the top priority of the organisation; and that the need for ‘talents’ has become more of a concern, thus the need for an effective management strategy for managing those talents (Ashton & Morton, 2005). Furthermore, the research by Orchid Slingshot Consultancy

Company (2012) who surveyed CEOs, business owners, managers, and HR managers in Thailand illustrated that TM was highly important; but also acknowledged the big challenges in applying TM strategies (Poldech & Pimolsangsuriya, 2012b).

In the previous section we focused on defining who ‘talented workers’ are, while in this section we will focus on how they are managed. TM is generally concerned with effectively managing talented workers (Armstrong, 2009; Blass, 2007; Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012b; Ingham, 2006; Lewis, 2000; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; McGee, 2006; Michaels et al., 2001; Powell, 2012). Organisations employ TM strategies to manage individual talents in order to achieve organisational goals and objectives (Blass, 2009). Kim and McLean (2012) and Iles, Chuai, & Preece. (2010) observed that TM has recently attracted more attention and interest from practitioners and researchers (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Iles, 2008b; Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010; Iles, Preece, & Chuai, 2010; Lynton & Beechler, 2012) and as such has become one of the most widely considered topics in the 21st century.

TM is an important strategic tool for managing talent effectively and its importance can be seen in the relationship between TM and performance outcomes as illustrated in Figure 2.5. In this section, we will therefore initially define ‘talent management’, and then explore and discuss how TM strategies are used to manage talented workers.

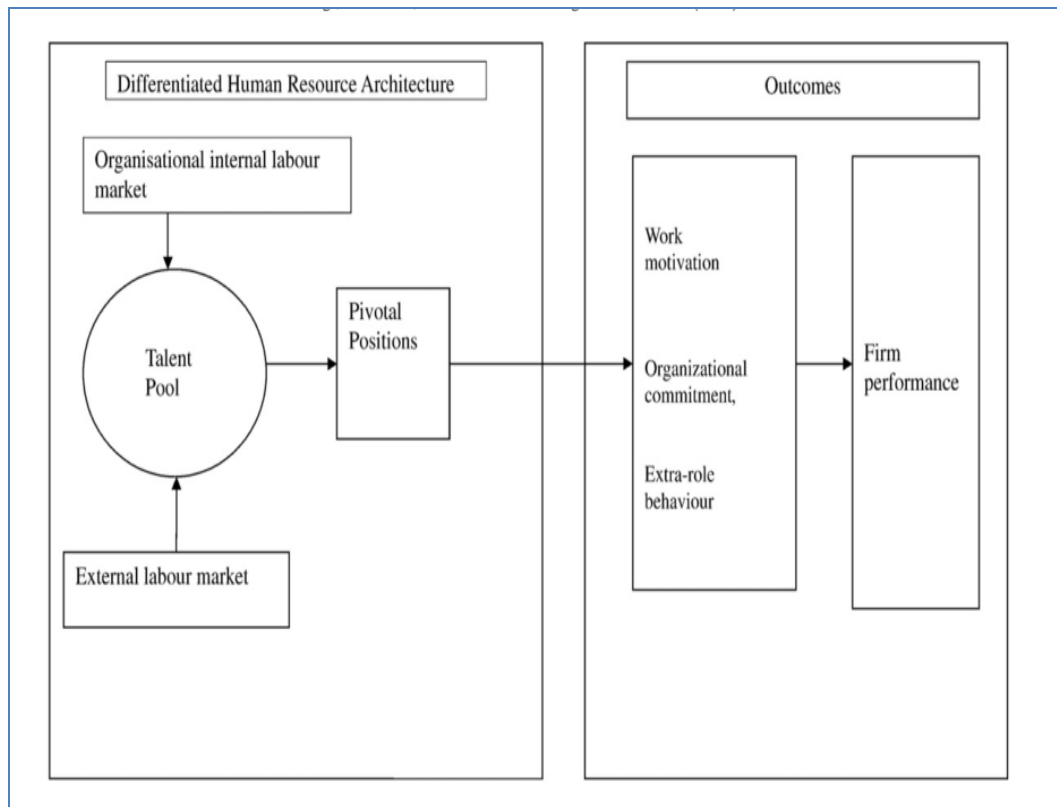


Figure 2.4: Strategic talent management [Relation between Talent Management and performance Outcomes]

(Source: Collings and Mellahi, 2009; p. 306)

Part of the debate about TM is on its relations with Human Resources Management (HRM). The views about TM are varied — thus, some academics have argued that TM is the new package of HRM (Iles, Chuai, Preece, 2010; Iles, Preece, Chuai, 2010; Preece et al., 2011). However for some, TM is broadly viewed as a core function of HRM (Iles, Preece, Chuai, 2010). Furthermore, this term is often confused with the concept of human capital management (HCM) introduced by Schultz in 1960. HCM identifies employees as the most important asset in the organisation and focuses on the total value of employees (Baron & Armstrong, 2007; Hayton, 2003). The general argument is that the concept of HCM is relatively close to TM. However, HCM does not regard workers as any different from other capital such as land, money, machines, etc. and, in fact, in HCM workers are categorised as other capitals. By contrast, TM focuses on individuals who possess exceptional abilities and skills thus able to contribute to high performance (Deloitte, 2005; Ingham, 2006; Kabwe, 2011; Mellahi & Collings, 2010; Powell & Lubitsh, 2007) and on the process of recruiting and retaining these people.

Another closely related school of thought is that TM can be divided into three main categories (e.g. Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010; Lewis et al. 2006). The first main category focus on a collection of HR process and practices, starting from attracting, recruiting and selecting, developing, retaining and deploying people with the required skills and aptitude to meet current and future business strategy (Byham, 2001; Heinen & O'Neill, 2004; Lockwood, 2005; Mercer, 2005). The second category focuses on talented pools and talented pipelines (Cappelli, 2008b; D'Annunzio-Green, 2008; Jackson & Schuler, 1990; Kesler, 2002). TM is thus considered to be how organisations create pools of talent worker; which leads to organisational gain at all levels through the flow of talented workers across all levels of the organisation (D'Annunzio-Green, 2008; Iles, Chuai, Preece, 2010; Jackson & Schuler, 1990). This will create the work flow and ensure that the organisation remains competitive (Collings, McDonnell, & Scullion, 2009). The third category generally refers to talent and how talented workers as a resource that has to be managed appropriately by the organisation. This view also includes how talent workers are recruited and rewarded by the organisation. Thus, Michaels et al. (2001) categorised talented workers based on their performance into subgroups such as 'A'-players, 'B'-players, and 'C'-players. These correspond to 'high', 'medium' and 'low' performers, respectively. The high performers constitute only about 3% of the workers in the organisation (Berger & Berger, 2011). Therefore, the identification of key positions, which make a substantial impact on the organisation's competitive advantage, is important, and these positions filled from this talented pool (Collings and Mellahi, 2009).

According to Creelman (2004), TM is a perspective or mind-set of the organisation. The argument is that instead of focusing solely on input, there should also be a change in mind-set to focus on potential output (Huselid et al., 2005). In this regard, TM thus becomes the responsibility of all managers in the organisation to consider and participate in. This organisation mind-set entails connecting the organisation goal and organisation strategy. A survey by Towers Perrin, Consultant Company (2009) identified that the most critical TM processes for achieving results (and hardest to implement) are integrating TM processes more directly into business strategy and operations. Achieving this integration, is expected to create more consistency in how talent is identified,

developed and moved throughout the organisation, and giving business leaders' greater ownership and accountability for building talent pipeline. However, one of the biggest challenges facing organisations is how to build and sustain a strong talent pipeline (Stahl et al., 2012, p. 25).

Perspecti ve	Core belief	Recruitment & Selection	Retention	Succession Planning	Development Approach
Process	Include all processes to optimise people	Competence based, consistent approach	Good on processes such as work-life balance & intrinsic factors that make people feel they belong	Routine review process based on performance cycle	Development reviews as part of performance management. May be some individual interventions.
Cultural	Belief that talent is need for success	Look for raw talent. Allow introductions form in-house.	Allow people the freedom to demonstrate their talent and to succeed and fail.	Develop in-house if possible, if not look outside.	Individuals negotiate their own development paths. Coaching ^ mentoring are standard.
Competitiv e	Keep talent away from the competition.	Pay the best so you attract the best from the competition.	Good people like to work with good people. Aim to be employer of choice.	Geared towards retention — letting people know what their target jobs are.	Both planned and opportunistic approaches adopted. Mentors used to build loyalty.
Developme ntal	Accelerate the development of high potentials.	Ideally only recruit at entry point and then develop.	Clear development paths and schemes to lock high potentials into career paths.	Identified groups will be developed for each level of the organisation.	Both planned and opportunistic.
HR Planning	Right people in the right job at the right time.	Target areas of shortage across the company number and quotas approach.	Turnover expected monitored and accounted for in plans.	Detailed in-house mappings for individuals.	Planned in cycles according to business needs.
Change Manageme nt	Use talent management to instigate change in the organisation.	Seek out mavericks and change agents to join the organisation	Projects and assignments keep change agents, but turnover of mainstay staff can occur.	Can be a bit opportunistic initially until change is embedd3ed.	Change agent develop other who align what them and become the next generation of talent

Table 2.4: Operation of Talent Management

(*Source:* Blass, 2007, p.7)

Table 2.4 above illustrates the operation of TM as part of the HR function of an organisation. As indicated above, besides the skills set and “organisation mind-set”, TM is also concerned with recruitment and retention of ‘talent’. Consequently, D’Annunzio-Green (2008, p. 807) defined TM as “...*a holistic approach to human resource planning aimed at strengthening organisational capability and driving business priorities using a range of HR interventions. The concept is aimed to attract, develop, retain, and transition talented workers.*” Similarly, TM has also been invariably defined as “...*the recruitment, development and retention of individuals who consistently deliver superior performance.*” Davies et al. (2007) thus argues that “*TM strategy is a deliberate and structured corporate approach to the recruitment, retention and development of talented individuals within the organisation. The intention is to employ people who will consistently deliver superior performance.*”

To use TM strategies effectively, it is important to have a clear view of the whole TM process. McCauley and Wakefield (2006) listed the TM process as follows: workforce planning; talent gap analysis; recruiting, staffing; education and management; retention; talent review; succession planning and evaluation. Figure 2.5 below shows all the principle, processes, and practices of TM. Thus, when TM is brought into practice, it covers the HR activities. Moreover, when managing talented workers the ultimate aim is to hit these principles and practices of ‘TM’ such as recruitment & selection (R&S), and retention.



Figure 2.5: Principles, Processes and Practices of Talent Management
(Source: Stahl et al. ;2012, p. 27)

From Figure 2.5, we note that the most important principle of TM is to define and identify the employees that are critical to the organisation. In this view, the employees do not have to be senior because the critical position can be built inside the company. This view of defining talent is in-line with the subject versus object approach as suggested by Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) and thus other HR practices such as recruitment, selection, and retention can work more effectively. The Table 2.4 above also shows the overall operation of adopting TM in HR functions. Its purpose is to manage talent effectively within the organisation, and this partly explains the choice for reviewing and using TM strategies in this thesis. Furthermore, Table 2.4 (p.47) illustrates the operation of TM as part of HR functions, and indicates that TM strategies adopt a more ‘holistic’ strategic view to managing ‘talent’.

In conclusion, we note that TM is more sophisticated than traditional HRM and is aimed at more than just managing human resources (Iles, Chuai, & Preece., 2010; Iles, Preece, & Chuai, 2010). It covers HR practices that help the organisation to manage talent in order to increase the quality of its products and services by filling all pivotal positions of an organisation with talented workers, and also, by developing processes for attracting,

developing, retaining and utilising employees with the required skill and aptitude to meet current and future business strategy. While TM is multi-faceted and includes among other things, for example recruitment and selection practices, this thesis will particularly focus on the retention of talent. Green and Brooke (2001) argue that the labour market shortage has created a fierce competition of attracting, recruiting and retaining talent and here we argue that retention is much more fundamental for organisations. This is mainly because losing talent implies that you are losing someone who would probably have gained an invaluable experience through working for the organisation, and the associated costs of developing this talent that the organisation would have already incurred. All employers who want their organisation to run smoothly and stay competitive should put more emphasis on retaining the best, most qualified and the most productive workers i.e. talented workers (Joyce, 2010; Joyce & Slocum, 2012; Kirton, 2014; Schweyer, 2004; Thorne & Pellant, 2008).

The next section will focus on best practice in managing talent, and especially on talent retention. This is because talent retention is one of the most challenging problems of managing talent given the level of turnover, particularly, in the hospitality industry and in the hotel sector.

2.3.2. Managing Talent – Talent Retention

Imagine your company has the right talent in pivotal roles at the right time. What difference will these people make to revenues, innovation and organisation effectiveness compared with having to operate without them? What are the cost of the lost opportunities – and the downtime and replacement costs – of losing critical talent? What are the consequences of having to make do with the wrong kind of leaders and managers in the top two executive layers – or of not having successors groomed and ready to replace them? (Ashton & Morton, 2005, p. 28)

The quotation above illustrates the importance of having talent and managing it effectively and warns of the dangers associated with losing those talents. In addition, it illustrates that managing talent brings with it many challenges and problems. One of the main challenges faced by organisations is succinctly summed-up by McCauley and Wakefield (2006, p. 4) who observed that: “*Today's businesses face increased global competition, shifting markets, and unforeseen events. No wonder they are finding it more difficult than ever to attract, develop, and retain the skilled workers they need.*” The

notion that there is a general shortage of ‘talent’ within the work environment led to the McKinsey consultancy company coining the phrase ‘war for talent’ as an indication that organisations fight for this limited resource; and this point was noted above.

This section will highlight the factors that hinder the effective management of talent. The implementation of an effective TM solution presents many problems and challenges, from both macro and micro economic influences. Thus for example, in addition to the macro factors such as skills shortage, there also exists strong competition amongst companies to attract the best talent (Mitchell, Holtom, & Lee, 2001). Furthermore, another key macro challenge for companies is to retain its existing talent; especially existing senior talent who can contribute to organisational competitiveness (Kerr-Phillips & Thomas, 2009). We will also discuss how to retain the best talent in the organisations.

2.3.2.1. Challenges of Managing Talent: Talent Turnover

“One of the most important aspects of talent is its mobility. As Bill Gates once observed, the key assets of Microsoft go up and down in the elevators and in and out of doors of the company every day (Cheese et al., 2008, p. 47). Also, research conducted by Deloitte (2005), in which 1,396 human resource practitioners took part, concluded that attracting and retaining talent is the most critical issues for the organization (see also, Jauhari, Rishi, Bharwani, and Butt, 2012; Hughes and Rog, 2008). Similarly, the Towers Watson HR consultancy company found that the main HR challenges in Thailand was retaining the best talent and this was followed closely by attraction of talent (Changchit, 2014). Furthermore, part of the challenge here was the mobility and/or turnover of this ‘key asset’ (Iverson & Deery, 1997).

The factors that lead to voluntary turnover are from internal factors and external factors (Green & Brooke, 2001; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Stahl et al., 2012). The external factors are concerned with the environmental changes that take place outside the organisation, while internal factors are within the control of the organisations and can

usually influence the policy of managing talent. Table 2.5 below provides a list of internal factors and external factors.

Internal Factors	External Factors
Organisational Policy	Labour force demographic decline
Organisational Culture	Global Labour market
Image of the organisation	Unemployment situation
Nature of job image	Social and political environment
	Legal considerations
	National culture
	Global economic condition and competitiveness

Table 2.5: Factors Influences Turnover

(Source: Adapted from Beechler & Woodward, 2009)

Thus, for example, one of the main external challenges factor facing organisations while trying to attract and retain talent is the decline in labour force demographic. The changing workforce demographic reduces the labour pools and thus creates a talent squeeze. However, Minbaeva & Collings (2013) argued that this trend is only evident in developed countries such as the USA, where there is not enough supply of talent. This does not apply to emerging countries, such as Thailand. However, emerging countries have their own challenges such as the lack of quality workers who match to job requirements. In direct contrast, it can be argued that developing countries such as Thailand are also facing significant demographic changes (International Monetary Fund, 2015), and more so a lack of quality workers (Hudoyo, 2014; Poldech & Pimonsangsuriya, 2012b; Siow, 2013). Thus, organisations across the world are all competing to get the best quality workers for themselves, which leads to the ‘war for talent’.

Another closely related challenge is that the workforce industry is becoming a global market (with the demand and supply of labour in the labour market becoming globalised) with organisations competing for the same resources. If the demand for labour is more than the supply, then organisations have to put in more effort. By contrast, if the supply is more than the demand then this will make it much easier for the organisation. Currently there is more demand than supply of talented employees in global labour market (Burbach & Royle, 2010; Cappelli, 2008a; Manpower Group, 2013a, 2013b). Cheese et al., 2008 pointed to a study by Ashridge Management Index of Business Trends, which found that 66% of respondents (managers) put TM to be more challenging in the age of globalisation. This study also shows that 53% of the managers need a greater process on selecting and preparing the future generation of the managers. Meanwhile, Scullion and Collings (2006) focused on multinational companies, and noted that they have problems in attracting, retaining and developing the managerial talent to manage in the global market. Concerning the hotel industry in Thailand, the introduction of the AEC would also present the same problem. AEC countries would be competing amongst each other not only to provide the best service but to also attract the best talent so as to remain competitive. Thus, retaining the best talent is one of the most crucial issues that the organisations have to pay attention to.

With regards to the national culture, it is noted that this can influence how the management team treat and care for their talented workers (Schuler, Dowling, & De Cieri, 1993). In order to create an effective talent management strategy, organisations may need to consider the national culture of the country in which they operate-in because every country has its unique culture (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Lewis (2000) noted that the national culture includes human relationships; working style. Thus, for more internationalised organisations, one of the main challenges is the local culture which can be affect how the organisation is managed.

Furthermore, ‘talented workers’ are highly mobile and sort after. As a result, finding and keeping them becomes a major challenge for organisations, and as observed “...*for corporations, managing these widely scattered, talented, restive, multicultural workforces has never been harder*” (McGregor & Hamm, 2008, p. 34). In the war of ‘talent’, their argument (the McKinsey consultancy) is that organisations are therefore

“...fighting to identify, recruit and retain the best ‘talent’ within an area where there is a shortage”. In that regard, “...winning the war of talent isn't just about recruiting and retaining people”, but it also entails investing on the talent. It thus means, “...you’ve got to invest in A performers, raise the game of B performers, and-perhaps more challengingly decisively deal with C performers” (Axelrod et al., 2002, p. 80). The idea that it pays-off to take such action is supported by a survey conducted by Axelrod et al., (2002, p. 81), which involved 13000 top-tier senior managers from 112 organisations. They concluded that most of the organisation’s successes depended on careful management of ‘A’ and ‘B’ performers thus, ‘A’ managers, on average, grew profits by between 80% and 130%; while in some cases ‘C’ managers achieved no profit growth (Axelrod et al., 2002, p. 83). Interestingly, the research also found that 80% of respondents commented that working with low performer prevents them from learning and making a greater contribution to the organisation; and thus wanted them to leave the organisation (Axelrod et al., 2002, p. 83).

It is noted that in response to these challenges, some organisations are focusing more on effectively managing human resources. The aim is to get the right people into the right positions and to retain the best talent in the organisation (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012a, 2012c; Manpower Group, 2012; Poldech & Pimolsangsuriya, 2012b). Thus, talent is important to any organisations, having the right talent who can contribute a greater performance to the organisations is imperative. For example, in Thailand where is transitioning to the AEC, organisations in that country will have to prepare for international competition and the country has to fight to win the talent in order to remain competitive.

The turnover rate trends vary among different age groups (generations), with the younger generation tending to move from company to company easily. According to a report by Powell (2012), for example, the younger talented workers in China keep accepting better job offers from new companies. It is not surprising that this ‘group’ tends to have high expectations of their current employers. For example, Vaiman and Vance (2010) conducted a survey of generation Y and found that 80% of the respondents expected to be promoted in 2 years. The survey also found that 90% of them stay with the organisation if the employer gives them the right training and development

opportunities; 97% valued empowering leadership styles (employment, consultation & partnership) and indicated that they will leave their current employers if they did not get that promotion. Generally, this age group preferred to work with larger organisations; and generally stayed with organisation for less than 2 years. This has been interpreted to indicate that “...*this generation has been raised to be independent thinkers by their ‘baby boom’ parents and have received enormous amounts of praise and cognition and they also see their parents working hard.*” The study by Solnet and Hood (2008) also similarly concluded that these “millennials” have different perspectives than the former generation and they are unlikely to remain in the same organisation.

It can be concluded that, talent turnover is a major challenge for the hospitality industry, thus, managing and especially retaining talent effectively is not an easy task and costly for the industry to lose them. This is because talent possesses knowledge and skills quickly; and this enables them to contribute to the organisation’s success and ensures that the organisation gains competitive advantage. Thus, the next section will further discuss the motivations and drivers to retain talents.

2.3.2.2. Talent Retention Strategy — Motivations and Drivers

Talent essentially means the total of all the experiences, knowledge, skills, and behaviours that a person possesses and brings to work. Today’s business success is dependent on having the right match of talent in the organisation (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Phillips & Roper, 2009). Thus, whatever its business or activity, the organisation’s survival depends on the ability to define, discover, develop and deploy talent. Talent, thus need to be acquired, developed, and retained effectively in order to meet the business goals (Cheese et al., 2008; Luthans, Luthans, & Luthans, 2004). For talent to meet its targets as set by the organisation it needs the attention and support from the organisation.

Cheese et al. (2008, p. 46) further explained that:

...the support people receive from relationship and their environment at work, organisation and process, technology, information and from factors outside work, including family, friends, health and recreation, are all factors that influence how effectively talent is engaged, developed and directed'.

Despite talent receiving more attention from organisations due to it being a valuable resource, many organisations still face the big challenge of talent turnover (Lockyer, 2010); Walsh & Taylor, 2007). In the hotel industry, talent turnover may result in lower service quality (Lockyer, 2010; Walsh & Taylor, 2007). This was discussed in section 2.4.1.

The retention of ‘talented’ employees is considered to be central to the success and health of organisations (Suff, 2014). Talent generally has a very high turnover and the hospitality industry is not exempt from this major problem. Therefore, there is need to pay considerably attention on how to retain talent. Improving employee retention should be unique to the organisation; the organisations have to understand the reason why employees are leaving their jobs. This will help them to improve employee retention (Suff, 2014). Thus, Suff (2014), also recommended that organisations have to develop sophisticated short-term and long-term strategies for promptly acting on issues of high resignations.

However, Horowitz (2011) almost takes an opposite view to that expressed above. He argues that maybe organisations should not worry about retaining talent as it may be too expensive to retain them. In fact, he sees talent as a potential source of problems. His view is that having talent can reduce the performance in the organisation because they misbehave in some cases (e.g. complaining constantly, rebelling, etc.), and his recommendation is that any talent who misbehaves has to be fired rather than kept in the organisation. The other argument is that some talents stop trying once labelled as such. More so, some researchers have reservations about the idea of recruiting talent for organisations. For example, Horowitz (2011) argues that he would not keep the smart workers (high performance talented worker) as these kind of workers have too high a standard and too high expectation in everything and they think they are better than anyone else. Despite arguments such as that of Horowitz (2011); clearly there are far more benefits from talent as already discussed. For example, Tansley et al. (2007, p.8), defined them as “...*individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance, either through their immediate contribution or in the longer-term by*

demonstrating the highest levels of potential.” In addition, as they are super-keepers, they can make the difference (Berger & Berger, 2011).

Employee retention is an important ongoing process in which the organisation aims to retain employees for the maximum period of time or until the completion of the project. It refers to the various policies and practices that let the employees stick to an organisation for longer periods. To achieve employee satisfaction and hence retention, organisations have to keep on learning how to keep their employee’s satisfaction at the highest level, as employee retention is positively correlated to customer retention and to quality of services (Lockyer, 2010; Walsh & Taylor, 2007). Therefore, effective recruitment and development reduces turnover rate.

However, as we have mentioned earlier talent is unique as discussed in Section 2.2. Thus, they are motivated differently from other workers. Thorne & Pellant (2008, p. 81) argue “...*talented people are different. They have different drivers and motivators.*” and that “...*they are also very individualistic and as such there is not one universal approach that suits all talent*” (p.81).

Employee satisfaction is concerned with trying to keep talented workers in the company; and this can be achieved through job satisfaction and a work-life balance is also important (Deery, 2008). This is especially true for the ‘Y’ generation who are the main workforce and have very high expectations. Additionally, constantly motivating employees also plays a significant role in employee satisfaction (Hagel & Brown, 2009). Individuals who classified as high potentials are not only seeking well-paid jobs but that their payments and or returns based on their performance (Katzenbach, 2006; Ryan & Sagas, 2009), that is, this group wants to ‘produce’ performances and contributions that they can be proud-of.

Before attempting to motivate talent, first and foremost the organisations have to know that talents are more motivated from the self concept base. Schein and Schein (1978) found that most people and/or talents would make career choice based on three components of self-concept:

- Self-perceived talent (competency);
- Self-perceived motives and needs (intrinsic or extrinsic needs); and
- Self-perceived values.
- *Self-reliant – was added from the first three components

*Self-reliant – was added from the first three components when Schein (1996) found drive of economic and technological changes led to more standard of work. Thus, the opportunities on skills is concerned when making a career choice.

The research of Igarria & Shavo (1989) found that organisations need to understand the three main drivers of attracting and motivating talents (cited in Nelson & Todd, 2003). The motivations may need to be changed throughout the period, thus understanding the nature of talent is important (see Table 2.6. below)

Driver	Year with organisation		
	0-1	1-3	4-5
Compensation	1	2	3
Career Development	3	1	2
Work Environment	2	3	1

Table 2.6: Relative Importance of Drivers Over Time (1 = high; 2 = moderate; 3 = Low)

(Source: Nelson and Todd, 2003, p. 12)

At this point, we understand what motivates career choices of talented workers. We are going to see how the organisation can cope with the needs of talent in a bid to motivate them to stay with the organisation. We discuss the techniques used to motivate and retain talent below.

According to Glen (2006), compensation is the single most important determinant for talented workers to remain with the organisation. Similarly, Singh (2008) concluded that workers in the hospital industry are motivated by financial rewards (e.g. fair wage package) and suitable conditions of service (e.g. working hours per week). There are two groups of people. Their personal stake in the business, career advantage, rewards and

recognition motivate one group. Meanwhile the other group considers a combination of the role challenge, organisation values, and work environment. (Glen, 2006).

The use of monetary compensation and other benefits to motivate talent are a very common technique. Martell and Carroll (1995) claim that this is a technique primarily used for motivating talent. The general rule of payment and other benefits received is in accordance with the quality of work, attitude towards customers, and willingness to learn and grow in the organisation (Glen, 2006; Milkovich, Gerhart, & Hannon, 1991). De Cieri and Kramar (2008, p. 62) noted that “*a higher level of pay and/or benefit relative to that of competitors can ensure that a company attracts and retains high-quality employees.*” This technique may help with talent retention, and indeed research by Chan and Kuok (2011) found that the major reason (90% of respondents) for employee turnover is due to salary. The same research also found that the second reason for moving jobs is due to the better benefit offer elsewhere. The intention to leave due to payment is also cited in the recent study by Scott (2012). The study by Scott (2012) investigated the reason why employees leave their current employment; and the research identified two main reasons: opportunities to earn more money elsewhere (77%), and lack of promotion opportunities (67%). Michaels et al. (2001, pp. 42-43) conclude, “*...talented people want the big money and all the perks.*” Therefore, this technique is viewed as the most effective tool for attracting, motivating, and retaining valuable employees (Bergmann & Bergmann, 1994).

The ‘discrepancy theory’ supports the view that pay and other benefits are vital. The discrepancy theory postulates that job satisfaction (or lack of it) arises from the discrepancy between what income an employee thinks they deserve to get and what they are actually getting; measured in relationship to what fellow employees are getting. Rice, McFarlin and Bennett (1989) found that satisfaction only arises when they perceive that their contributions and job requirements are aligned. However Lehmann (2009), Selden and Moynihan (2000), Lewis (1991), Michaels et al. (2001), Thorne & Pellant (2008), and Tymon Jr, Stumpf, Doh (2010) claimed that in order to motivate talented workers, then should also focus on non-monetary measures. It is not achievable only through the monetary compensation and other benefits (extrinsic motivations). The motivation of the talented workers must be fulfilled through intrinsic motivation. It is for example through

participation and personal relationship. The research by Gibbons (2006) indicated that sources of motivation (e.g. pride / good relationship with supervisor) play a more important role than intrinsic motivation. Lehmann (2009) concluded that talented workers should be encouraged with pay; complemented by social recognition, coaching, job rotation and provision of personal oriented training and development. Having the right motivation will directly impact on employee's loyalty, trust, their perception of fairness, keeping promises and meeting obligations.

Thorne & Pellant (2008) suggested that talent need recognition, and feel they are achieving something significant, exciting, and that they are making a difference. Creating the right environment and career opportunities can lead to this excitement (Michaels et al, 2001).

Therefore, pay is not the only means of talent motivation and satisfaction. Organisations have to keep promises made to talent at the recruitment stage, before they started their job, with regards to money and promotion. As D'Annunzio-Green (2008, p. 815) indicated good people move around after 2-3 years if they do not get speedy promotion opportunities as promised. Thorne & Pellant (2008) also made similar observations. Nickson (2007) suggested that to motivate talent to stay, the organisations have to:

- Involve and engage talent – this can be achieved through selling the organisation's vision, culture and goals. The organisation should be engaged from the first day (Allen & Doladee, 2011);
- Create opportunities for talent to have influence and have their opinions taken into consideration in the decision making process (Allen & Doladee, 2011).

Furthermore, Gibbons (2006) identified the following as major drivers influencing talent to stay:

- Trust and integrity – the extent to which the organisation's leadership is perceived to care about employees, listens and responds to their opinions, is trustworthy, and 'walks the talk'.
- Nature of the job – the extent of employee participation and autonomy,

- The connection between individual and company performance – the extent to which employees understand the company’s objectives, current levels of performance, and how the best contribute to them;
- Career growth opportunities – extent to which employees have opportunities for career growth and promotion or have a clearly defined career path;
- Pride about company – the extent to which employees derive self-esteem from their works;
- Co-workers/team members – attitudes and perspectives of co-workers towards their jobs and the company;
- Employee development – the extent to which efforts are made to develop the employee’s skills; and
- Personal relationship with one’s manager – the extent to which the employee values this relationship (Hughes and Rog, 2008, p. 749).

Meanwhile, Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy, and Baert (2011, p. 37) identified seven factors as likely to promote talent retention, and these are: compensation and appreciation of the work performed; the provision of challenging work; opportunities to learn; positive relationships with colleagues; recognition of capabilities and performance contributions; good work-life balance; and good communication within the organisation. Meanwhile, the research by Uygulamasi (2014) found that retention of talent is due to trust of the organisation; overlapping individual targets and organisational targets; career development opportunities; fair reward system; and challenging and interesting work.

- ***Praise and feedback*** are other aspects influencing talent retention. This view is supported by Thorne & Pellant (2008, p. 81) who contend that “*what talented people hate is being ignored, or, even worse, being told to stay in their box, when they have the capability to work across a number of area.*”
- ***Recognition*** — talent regards recognition as an important aspect of motivating talent. For example, research by Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, Smale, and Sumelius (2013) found that talents who have been formally identified as talent in the organisation are more likely to be motivated to stay with the organisations. Recognition can be provided through rewards. As Tymon Jr et al. (2010) indicated, the organisation should provide both intrinsic (praise of good work) and extrinsic rewards (e.g. benefit of accommodation).

Indeed, Allen (2008) added three types of connections that are related to willing of talent to stay with the organisation. There are link, fit, and sacrifice.

- Link is the relationship of the team.
- Fit is how the individual feels about their job and organisation.; and
- Sacrifice is the consequences if the talent decided to leave their current job (e.g. the relationship with team, work environment).

In conclusion, it is noted, that in order to retain talent effectively organisations have to consider among other things the career choices of talent and the needs of talent in order to encourage them to remain committed and stay with the organisation. The motivation techniques can be categorised into extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivation is the external compensation such as money and promotion; while intrinsic motivations are related to talent personal fulfilment like recognition, praise feedback, participation in decision-making, etc. It is concluded that in order to retain talent effectively, the organisation have to consider that the talented workers are driven by the combination of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (Allen, 2008; Björkman et al, 2013; Govaerts et al, 2011; Hughes and Rog, 2008); Lehmann, 2009; Throne & Pellant, 2008). As a unique workforce, talents need to be treated differently from ‘normal’ workers. Thus in the case of the hospitality industry it will be necessary to investigate how Thai hotels motivate talent in order to keep them within the hotels.

2.3.2.3. Talent Retention– Best Practice

Based on the discussion about the problems and challenges of effectively implementing and managing talent effectively (Section 2.3.2.1), and the likely threats arising from AEC (which will be discussed in Section 2.6.1), the hospitality industry in Thailand should be able to manage talent effectively to remain competitive. To bring talent into practice is not a basic task, because identifying and managing talent covers an extremely broad area including recruitment, selection, development, compensation, rewarding, and retention (Stahl et al, 2012). Therefore, there has to be sophisticated plan.

In the previous section (Section 2.3.2.1) there was a discussion about problems such as ‘shortage of talent’ and the ensuing ‘war for talent’ that arises thereof. It therefore

implies that organisations have to consider the issue of ‘the war for talent’, and that entails that they:

- Embrace a talent mind-set, and make talent management a critical part of every manager’s job.
- Create a winning ‘employee value proposition’ that provides a compelling reason for a highly talented person to join and stay with your company.
- Rebuild your recruiting strategies to inject talent at all levels, from many sources, and to respond to the ebbs and flows in the talent market.
- Weave development into the organisation by deliberately using stretch jobs, candid feedback, coaching, and mentoring to grow every manager’s talents.
- Differentiate the performance of your people, and affirm their unique contribution to organisation. (Michaels et al, 2001; Stahl et al, 2012)

Also, Stahl et al (2012) and Lewis and Heckman (2006) note that in order to manage talent effectively and retaining talent, organisations need to consider the following aspects:

1. ***Alignment with the organisation strategy***: this is the flow process and strategic management of how the organisations align the right people with the right jobs at the right time based on strategic business (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Duttagupta, 2005; Heinen & O'Neill, 2004). Stone (2002) noted flexibility is an important consideration to achieve this alignment, given that business strategies may change.
2. ***Internal consistency***: *there is also need for internal consistency in managing talent. In other words, it needs to be linked together and moving in the same direction (D’Annunzio-Green, 2008, p. 807). For example, retention is probably the most important part of managing talent. Even though there are many retention tools available; however not every tool fits the company structure and the retention of desirable applicants. It is important for the company to use the correct medium so that they can motivate and thus retain the best talent (Johnson, Winter, Reio Jr, Thompson, & Petrosko, 2008).*

3. **Cultural embeddedness:** hiring, promoting, deploying or retaining talent should be fit to the organisational culture. The actor should consider cultural fit and comparable fit to the organisation.
4. **Management involvement:** retaining talent is the responsibility of managers at all levels, and for this reason they need to involve their management with the employees in the talent management (Thorne & Pellant, 2008). The participation of managerial level will give more understanding of how they support all processes of managing talent. McCauley and Wakefield (2006) argue that the task of managing talent is a sophisticated process which should entail cooperation and communication among managers at all levels. That is, all managers should share the same vision and view. Ruddy and Anand (2010) also support that the strategic decision to become more decentralised involving all managers rather than centralised involving only top managers in order to achieve balance of power. Thus, managing talent is not a single department task, it is an overall organisation strategy.
5. **Differentiate employer branding:** the embedding of culture is based on the vision of the company and therefore is cross-linked with the employer branding (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Though the vision is mostly handled by the public relation team, the HR department might have to participate in building organisation reputation (Schuler, Budhwar, & Florkowski, 2002). More competitiveness requires the organisation to focus on attracting new workers and motivate current workers to stay. For that reason employer branding is one of the approaches of filling a gap between increasing in number of hotels and the lack of talented employees (Chen, 2012). Employee branding is split into a three-step process — concept of values, publicity, and integration. The first step is to define the concept of values (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), which are then publicised to the outside world in order to motivate potential workers. The third step is to integrate the values into the company (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Additionally, research in *Personal Today* (a HR magazine) found that employee retention initiatives are foremost in the minds of people tasked with developing their organisation as an employer of choice (Glen, 2006, p. 45).
6. **Employee satisfaction:** is concerned with trying to keep the talent in the company achieved through job sculpting and a work-life balance (Deery, 2008).

Additionally, constantly motivating employees also plays a significant role in employee satisfaction (Hagel & Brown, 2009). Payment is influenced by an individual performance evaluation of the employees, as high potentials are not only seeking for a well-paid job but for payment based on their results (Katzenbach, 2006).

There is no doubt that the decision regarding TM investment has an impact on the overall organisation success. As a result, the decision to invest in managing talent has to be carefully taken; and part of that decision would be whether to be externally focused (future talents) or internally focused (future and current talents) (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012). Ulrich (2008) argued there are six ways of investing in talent as follows:

- *‘Buying talents’* – this is achieved by recruiting, sourcing and securing new talent into the organisation.
- *‘Building talents’* – this is achieved by helping people grow through training, job assignments or life experiences. This helps to ensure that the organisation has talent who will fit into its culture (CIPD, 2007; Stahl et al, 2012). Govaerts et al (2011) note that appropriate development is expected to drive talent motivation; and thus leads to commitment and increase the likelihood of ‘talent staying’ with the organisation. Meanwhile, poor development is five times likely to influence managers to leave the organisation than leave an organisation that is developed (Michaels et al, 2001, p. 98).
- *‘Borrowing talents’* – this is achieved through bringing knowledge into the organisation through advisors or partners.
- *‘Bounding talents’* (promotion) — this is achieved through promoting the right people into key jobs, supported by the research of Walsh and Taylor (2007) in which 130 of 555 respondents in the hospitality industry indicated that the opportunity for advancement is the key to talent retention; and thus the research suggested that organisation should support the growth opportunity. The support should be through building a talent pipeline; and in fact it has been argued that it is difficult to fill key positions if one is lacking pipelines of potential workers (Ready and Conger, 2007; Scott et al 2007). The opportunity to grow was also

cited in Michaels et al (2001, p. 14), who note that “...talents are inclined to leave if they feel they are not growing and stretching.”

- ‘*Bouncing talent*’ – this entails removing poor performers from their jobs and/or the organisation. This is achieved through the categorisation of talent as ‘A’, ‘B’ and ‘C’ players; and in this case the organisation terminates the contracts of the poorest performer (‘C’ player) (Michaels et al, 2001).
- ‘*Binding talent*’- this is achieved by retaining top talent. This can be through the extrinsic or intrinsic approaches (see Section 2.5.2.2). Retaining talent is important as Bryan, Joyce, & Weiss (2006) noted that the more talented workers the organisation has, the greater demand in services to the organisation.

Adopting TM best practices should help organisations manage their best ‘talent’ effectively and thus ensure that they achieve their objectives.

Having talented workers means that the organisation is more likely to be able to achieve more organisational goals and sustain its competitiveness. With regards to TM, best practices may vary in different organisations, and in different industries. In this thesis there is also an interest in investigating ‘*how organisations value talent?*’ and ‘*how they treat talent (both the internal and external talents)?*’ Although everyone is willing to take more money when it is offered, retention of talent is typically not something that can be bought and paid for. Nelson and Todd (2003) also found that increasing the satisfaction often comes from compensation. However, factors such as opportunity to contribute to the business, access to new technology, opportunity for advancement, and clearly defined authority are also frequently noted in their research (Nelson & Todd, 2003).

From the discussion in sections 2.3.2.2 and 2.3.2.3, we note that there are many techniques (intrinsic and extrinsic) to motivate talent to be committed and ‘remain’ in the organisations. Different techniques suit different organisations and the aim would be to find-out which techniques the participants in this study use for managing talent within its ranks.

2.4. Talent In Hospitality Industry

This section will discuss about the nature of hospitality industry and how talent can be defined in this industry. The section will also focus on the definition and conceptualisation of the concept of ‘talent’ as used in this thesis; including problems related to talent in the hospitality industry.

2.4.1. Nature of hotel industry

Before investigating how the term talent is applied within the hospitality industry, we have to first understand the nature of this industry. The stereotype image of the hospitality industry is that it has ‘very poor working conditions’ (e.g. unsocial working hours, low pay, etc.), and therefore a clear understanding of the nature of this industry is important for understanding how the concept of talent fits within its set-up. In fact, Gilbert and Guerrier (1997) argued that an understanding the nature of this industry (e.g. industry’s characteristics) is important for management. An understanding of nature and image of the hospitality industry might also be useful as it might help clarify whether the term ‘talent’ and the associated challenges/problems are applicable to this industry.

As mentioned above, generally the hospitality industry is viewed as having low pay, poor working conditions, and as being operated by semi-skilled or unskilled workers (Baum, 1993, 1996, 2008; Duncan et al., 2013; Price, 1994; Riley, 2000). However, not all the participants in this industry shared this description of the industry. Indeed, there are both positive and negative perceptions about the industry. For instance, Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge, and Ogden (2007) found that students perceived the hospitality industry as an exciting and dynamic industry with good career opportunities; which also affords them the opportunity to work with public customers. By contrast, Gilbert and Guerrier (1997) found that managers perceived the industry as having a low status and image. The possible reason why students (who are generally less experienced) may regard this industry with so much excitement could be due to the excitement of meeting and interacting with new people from different cultures. And, yet for the more experienced workers (e.g. managers) who have been in the industry for many years, they are more likely to be dissatisfied to work in this industry. For these more experienced

workers, the sense of adventure might have ‘waned off’ and are now more concerned with the problems of ‘low status work’ and the perceived ‘poor working conditions’.

Evidently, the nature of the job image is one of the aspects that influences recruitment and retention of talent. The job with a good image (e.g. better remuneration, working condition, promotion, and career development opportunities) can mainly attract candidates with good potential and highly qualified.

Another closely related issue is that of the image of the organisation. Thus, organisations with a good image are very much able to attract candidates with a lot of potential (competent candidates) and are able to retain the same talent within its ranks. Barron et al. (2007) also noted that some of the poor image of this industry could be due to difficulties in dealing with different types of customers (highly demanding customers); and they thus argued that individuals who want to stay in this industry have been competitive oriented, hard-working, and patient. However, for example, good public relations and offering public services can help to enhance the image and reputation of the organisation.

The view that the hospitality industry has low-skilled workers was supported by research by Riley (2000) who concluded that almost 64 per cent of the workers in this industry are semi-skilled or unskilled. That view could lead to the mistaken conclusion that organisations do not have to bring the concept of talent into this industry. Indeed, it is noted that there is no unanimity on the view that the hospitality industry (especially hotels) workers are low skilled, with Baum (1996) contending that this high proportion of workers who are categorised as low skilled workers only apply to developed countries (e.g. UK) but not to developing countries (e.g. Thailand). Thus, quality employees are required to provide quality services (e.g. ability to communicate with customers in both verbal and non-verbal language; being able to understand different kinds of customers’ expectations). Key positions (talents) can help ensure that the organisation meets customers’ expectations and international standards.

Baum (1996) has dismissed the notion that the hospitality industry employees are semi-skilled. He explained that most of these jobs

...require some understanding of: the types of services required by tourists, who come from a totally different culture such as coastal villagers. Many also require proficiency in a foreign language, reading and writing skills, and so on. Few rural people have adequate education, language ability or experience outside their own village environment to participate in any tourism-related enterprise other than selling natural products such as shells. There are no short-cuts to achieving such capabilities (Baum, 1996, p. 208).

The conclusion drawn was that employees in the hospitality industry cannot be described as ‘unskilled workers’ and that in-fact “...very few tourism-related jobs are unskilled (Baum, 1996, p. 208)”.

Price (1994) criticised the hotel industry for not paying attention to their employees; and in-fact identities that there is a lack of interest in personnel management and training. Consequently, he observes that there is few staff having a job descriptions and pay for overtime. He terms this an ‘impersonal approach’ that is based loosely around the bare-minimum of what is legally acceptable. Pizam and Shani (2009) and Baum (2008) noted that the hospitality industry relies heavily on the human capital (people oriented) compared to other industries. This is despite this being an era of technological advancement. Moreover, Pizam and Shani (2009) argued this industry is slightly different from other service establishment — it does not only provide the basic human needs but also fulfils visitors’ dreams of happiness. This is achieved through direct interaction between the employee and customer, and tailoring the service to the unique individual needs of customers. The ability to respond to the needs of customer in different situations needs the hospitality industry to act creatively and imaginatively. Therefore, this industry needs employees qualified and competent to deliver a great service. This in turn implies these employees can satisfy customers’ demands particularly customers who can potentially be very complicated.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the hospital industry relies heavily on human labour, and the work is very much customer oriented and as a result of the nature of this work, the qualities needed of workers in this industry are different from those of other industries. As regards the debate about whether the workforce can be labelled as ‘low skills workers’, Baum (1996) contends that this image and stereotype might not be applicable to hospitality industries of many less developed countries e.g. Thailand;

particularly where services are being offered to international standards; this is specially in key positions. High quality services are required in this industry and by implication employment of quality workers, and therefore how the term talent is applied. This empirical field study therefore will investigate how the term talent is applied among the participating hotels.

2.4.2. Needs of ‘talent’ in the hotel industry

As already discussed above (Section 2.4.1), the hospitality industry is customer oriented and it relies heavily on labour to meet the customer satisfaction. Thus, there is consensus that the quality of employee performance is the most influential factor on customer satisfaction (Lee et al. 2015; He et al., 2011). Having the right talent or quality workers is one of the key elements for business success (He et al. (2011). This also appears to have a significant impact on customer repurchase intentions and customer loyalty (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012; Lee, Back, & Chan, 2015; Ou, Shih, Chen, & Wang, 2011; Ruddy & Anand, 2010). In the hospitality industry, customer experience of services is highly dependent upon personal interaction between employees and customers (Mullins 1998). As facilities and amenities are duplicated across organisation to organisation, the positive attitude and behaviour of employee can contribute to a favourable impression of the hotel (Lovelock et al. 2005).

Since the hospitality industry is highly reliant on human resources, it therefore becomes imperative that they should pay a great deal of attention to the issue of employees, and particularly the quality of its employees. One sure way to be able to identify, recruit and retain ‘talented’ employees. The recruitment and retention (especially retention) of ‘talent’ is also a function of managing the employees’ expectations and satisfaction; especially in the hotel sector where turnover of hotel employee tends to be very high (Mullins, 1998; Walsh & Taylor, 2007). Thus, in this thesis, there is a particular focus on retaining talent.

For the reasons discussed above, it can be concluded that the hospitality industry needs talent with qualities belonging in the 3Cs (Competence, Commitment, and Contribution) group. In this research, talent refers to some employees and not all the workers — talent

as key positions, in other words people in managerial level positions. We then borrow the capability of talent as specified by Dierdorff and Rubin (2006), who categorised the capability of talent (managerial level) into four domains:

- Behavioral capability: fit to the organisational culture and to the nature of industry
- Strategic skill capabilities comprises problem solving, decision making, financial and resources management (link to the organisation strategy)
- Knowledge capacity comprise knowledge of the organisational functions (from administration work, customer relation, human resource management, marketing, finance) (this is linked to the organisation strategy)
- Working style capabilities comprise willingness to learn, work motivation, leadership orientation (commitment to work; contribute to the other team member motivation; and result in contributing to work performance) in order to meet the organisation goal.

The hospitality industry is a customer interfacing industry; and this nature of the industry plays an important role in setting-out the criteria needed from workers. This is due to, the fact that the hospitality industry has to rely on the workers as the main drivers to contribute to customer satisfaction. Therefore, this section explains the quality of talented workers needed and suited to the hospitality industry. We borrow the qualities of talent from the research of Hesketh (2013, p. 5) that identified the quality of talent as the combination of competency, capability, experience, and motivation. Similarly, Ulrich and Smallwood (2012) identified competence, commitment, and contribution as the qualities of talent. Furthermore, many researchers (for example Blass, 2007; CIPD, 2007; Michaels et al., 2001) described talent based on their contribution, from the past experience (performance) and performance expectations (that they can contribute the good performance in the future (potential)). Therefore, definitions that refer to talent as ‘high performers or high potential’ focused/evaluated talent through its contribution.

In this section there will be a focus on the competencies which drive workers to give ‘great’ contribution. The competencies include hard or technical skills, and soft skills which are fundamental in this sector.

Weber, Crawford, Lee, and Dennison (2013) commented that both hard skills and the soft skills in combination form talent in the hospitality industry. According to Weber et al. (2013, p. 315) *“hard skills correspond to the skills in the technical and administrative categories, and soft skills correspond to the skills in the human, conceptual, leadership, and interpersonal categories.”*

Weber et al. (2013) came-up with four categories of soft skills; based on the research by Bayatzia (1982) and Stevens and Campian (1994). These are:

- Leadership/people/relationship skills — that is, the need to serve customers effectively, co-workers, and resolve any conflict that will assist the organisation to achieve the goal.
- Communication skills — the quality of the leader, and the need to create better job performance.
- Management skills — include setting goals, managing people and resources, monitoring progress, and solving problems.
- Cognitive skills and knowledge — this is creative thinking, decision-making, and problem solving.

However, the quality needed for talent changes over the time as the economic situation, and people’s attitudes shifts. These can vary differently (Davies, 2007; Iles, 2013; Tansley, 2011). The question is how is the quality of talent described in participating hotels in Thailand, and particularly the introductory of AEC.

2.4.3. Definition of talent in this thesis

In industries such as Engineering, music, art, estate etc (e.g. Michaels et al, 2001; Phillips & Roper, 2009); there are clear products which are produced, and this may make it easy to identify talent. However, in the service (hotel) sector, there are no clear products; and this presents problems in how ‘Talent’ or ‘Talented Workers’ can be defined in this industry. In this industry, there is no well-defined output through which ‘Talent’ can be measured against. Also, some industries have unique qualities, which make it harder to generalise the definitions. Thus, we contend that the lack of clarity of the concept talent and its conceptualisation within the hospitality industry is because the hotel industry is highly labour intensive with low skill set and varying labour skills level.

Therefore, it is not straightforward to borrow the concept of talent and talent management into the hospitality industry (e.g. hotel sector); as it will certainly require different qualities for hotel managers from those of housekeepers. Thus, the requirements for the talent in the hospitality industry may be different from the requirements in other industries. Tansley (2011, p. 266) argued that there are different organisational perspectives of talent. The current meanings of talent tend to be specific to an organisation and highly influenced by the nature of the work undertaken. A shared organisational language for talent is important. There is high level of influence of management consultants in the development of the concept in managing people with unique knowledge and skills. Also, Barron (2008, p. 731) argued that “*hotels have a poor reputation as a source of permanent employment — offering low pay, anti-social working hours, menial work, and limited opportunities’ for career progression*”. The Thai hotel industry is no exception to this problem. Therefore, it might be difficult to find and retain ‘talented workers’ that deliver service promises that organisations make to their current and potential customers, despite the conditions described above.

Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) made one of the great contributions on the subject of talent; especially in setting out the concept and the approach of defining talent in the world of work. However, this generated debate about how the concept can be applied to business and management in general and in different definitions of ‘talent’. I argue that some of the definitions may not be applicable to every business types. Thus, for example, the IT industry may define talent as high technical skills which lead great contribution to product development while the hotel industry might refer to talent as the individual who contributes to great service delivery. Davies et al, (2007) and Tansley, 2011 support this viewpoint. They suggested that talent might have different meanings depending on people, time, and location/organisation. Thus, for the hospitality industry which is heavily reliant on labour and whose contributed output is the quality of service delivered (and not tangible products); the question therefore is how the concept of talent can be applied to this industry?

The nature of hospitality industry is also different from other industries (as discussed in section 2.4.1), and therefore the concept of talent may not be the same. This is supported by Baum (2008), who argued that talent in the hospitality industry may not

mean the same thing as in other industries. Also, Iles (2013, p.302) noted that the concept of talent is “*often organisation-specific and highly influenced by the nature of the work*” (e.g. in health, IT, hotel). Thus, this section will discuss how talent is defined in this research.

Given the foregoing discussion on the different definitions of ‘Talent’ and ‘Talented workers’; the question that arises thereof is which definition(s) of talent is going to be adopted in this thesis and why? The other closely related question is: Does the concept of ‘talent’ exist at all levels of the workforce within the hotel industry.

In terms of who needs to be included as ‘Talent’, we argue that as a general principle all workers with the ‘right credentials and company fit’ need to be considered as qualifying for classification as ‘potential talent’. Within the hospitality industry the workforce has wide ranging ‘skills’. For example, for the housekeeper performance and achievement might be measured in terms of speed; while for the manager, performance and achievement might be measured in terms of strategic thinking and future planning. The main problem with including ‘all workers’ would be coming up with a definition of Talent which encompasses such as a wide range of skills set, and this would be virtually be impossible to achieve especially come-up with. Consequently, for purposes of this thesis, the concept of ‘talent’ will only focus on managerial talent (Micheals et al., 2001). The reason for focusing on managerial talent as a key role is that the management team has to deal with an ever changing hotel environment landscape and they have to have the foresight to drive and steer the boat in the right direction. The outcomes of what they are trying to achieve might not be immediately known until later on in life. Focusing on a particular group of employees also ensures that there is less variation in their skills level being investigated.

Another reason for focusing on middle level managers and high level managers is that these people are involved in the strategic thinking and mapping on the future path of the hospitality industry, and this is particularly so for Thai hotels within the context of emergence of the threat posed by AEC.

In that regard, the definition of ‘talent’ that will be adopted for this thesis is that it refers to some workers (current and future) in key positions. These are workers who exhibit the following qualities: competence (aligned with the organisation goal) + commitment (want to be with the organisation) + contribute to the great performance (both to customers — meet service quality; and co-workers — guide the other workers to work effectively). Not surprisingly, talent in this research is regarded as the combination of natural ability (willing to contribute the great service by nature) and nurture (experience on dealing with customers, co-workers, and the management of organisation. This ‘talent’ can be considered the source of competitiveness, allowing hotels to remain competitive despite the threat of the AEC. This definition is in line with that propounded by Michaels et al. (2001, p. xii) who viewed ‘talent’ as “*the sum of a person's abilities — his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgment, attitude, character and drive. It also includes his or her ability to learn and grow.*”

However, managing employees, especially those within the hospitality industry, and especially hotels that come into regular contact with customers is unlike managing employees in non-service industries such as manufacturing (Bowen & Ford, 2004). This is due to the intangibility of the product that is provided by hotels. Hotel employees need to meet customers’ demands for quality products and services, and this requires an equivalent level of skill and ability (Bowen & Ford, 2004). Employee members need to be well educated and trained in order to be able to deliver excellent service (Dotchin & Oakland, 1994a, 1994b; Heskett, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1997; Lovelock, Wirtz, Keh, & Lu, 2005).

According to Michaels et al. (2001), organisations that are better at managing talent can be 22 per cent better than their competitors (in terms of service delivery). Not surprisingly, if organisations are experiencing talent shortage then this negatively affects the “*service quality and firm/industry competitiveness*” (Hsu, 2012, p. 9343). The long-term successes of organisations are not only due to its product or service but also having the right quality of employees as the main driver.

As discussed in Section 2.4.1 (nature of the hospitality industry) the turnover rate is high in the hotel sector. The turnover of key worker hinders the organisation from fully utilising this source of competitive advantage.

2.5. The Conceptual Framework of Talent in the Hospitality Sector

This research's conceptual framework is presented in Figure 2.6 below. The boxes which marked in grey colour within the conceptual framework will not form part of the fieldwork research because of the time constraint. The conceptual framework illustrates the concept of talent in the hospitality industry (e.g. definitions, identification, etc.) and the management of that talent. This forms the cornerstone of this research. Retention of talent is important in light of the high staff turnover within hospitality industry and due to the fact that 'talent' enables organisations to remain or maintain its competitiveness.

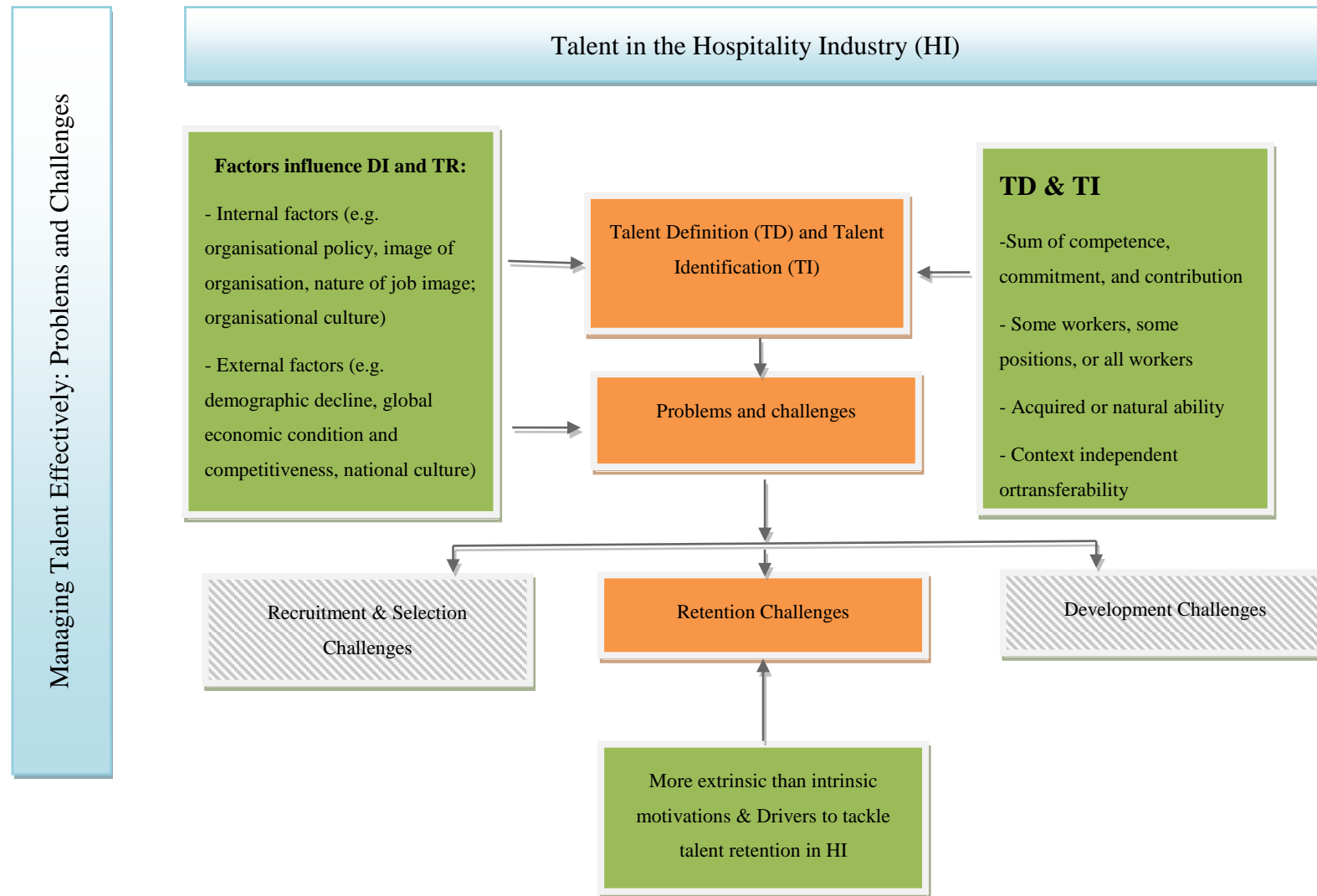


Figure 2.6 The conceptual framework of Talent in Hospitality Industry

2.5.1. Operationalisation: Talent

In order to retain talent effectively organisations have to come-up with the right strategy for retaining them. It is very important to know who is defined as talent or what talent is for the organisation? This is the first issue that is to be clarified with the participants - ‘how talent is defined and identified in the participating hotels?’ This issue also arises from the argument that talent means different things in different fields of work (Davies et al., 2007, Tansley, 2011). More so, this argument is pinpointed by Baum (2008) who insisted that talent in the hospitality industry might not mean the same as it is in other industries. From the literature review we found that concerning the definition of talent; there was debate about whether talent can be categorised talent as ‘natural ability’ or ‘mastery’; whether talent refers to some workers or all workers; and whether, the ability is transferable or context dependent? Furthermore, the question is what quality constitutes talent? All of which will be discussed below.

2.5.1.1. Natural ability versus mastery of talent

From the literature review we found that concerning the definition of talent; there was debate about whether talent can be categorised talent as ‘natural ability’ or ‘mastery’? These schools of thought will be discussed below as follows:

- *Talent as natural ability*: in this school of thought talent is generally viewed as a natural skill / gift (Chabault et al., 2012; Tansley, 2011). The extreme view is that talent cannot be learnt (Lunn, 1992). However, talent as the pure natural ability is only applied in some particular field such as art (Tansley, 2011); and therefore may not necessarily fit with the hotel industry scenario.

- *Talent as mastery* – this school of thought argues that talent can be trained or learnt; and this view is supported by many authors,(e.g. Gagné ,2004; Iles 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). Gagné (1999) contends that talent emerges from learning, and is thus a mastery of a skill which is developed through practice (Iles, 2013, p.301).

Gagné (2004) further made the point clear by arguing that ‘talent’ is a mastery (that is, systematically developed skills or training) rather than the mere ability.

-Talent as natural ability + mastery – This is the school of thought that is mostly accepted within the domain of business and management in 21st century (Gallardo-Gallardo et al 2013; Abbott and Collins, 2002; Howe et al, 1998; Meyers et al 2013; Iles, 2013). Additionally, fit to the organisation is also considered very important to most organisations (Gallardo-Gallardo et al 2013; Iles, 2013; Tansley, 2011; Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012)

We are thus going to investigate how the concept of talent is applied in the domain of hospitality industry – *‘how are talents defined among the participating hotels?’* and *‘whether they consider it to be pure natural ability, mastery (acquire), or the combination of natural ability+ mastery?’*

2.5.1.2. All workers versus Some workers

In addition to the above schools of thought, there is also some debate about whether talent refers to some workers or all workers? Another debate within the area of defining talent is whether talent is all workers or some workers?

- Talent as all workers – here the view is that everyone in the organisation is talent; and the argument is that organisations should not focus on any particular people/ area/ positions. This is regarded as the inclusive approach (Al Ariss et al., 2013; Davies et al, 2007). Davies et al. (2007, p.2) argues that talent should not be restricted to particular grades or areas of responsibility, and thus contends that it appears at all work levels and in all functions. This view points to the possible detrimental effects that might result from excluding some people.

- The view that talent is some workers; that is, exclusive approach is supported by many scholars (e.g. Beechler & Woodward, 2008; Berger & Berger, 2011; Blass,

2007; Chabault et al, 2012; Huselid et al, 2005; Michaels et al, 2001; Smith, 2008; Tower Perrin, 2008). This view is noted as the modern view while inclusive approach (all workers) is something of the past (Michaels et al., 2001). McDonnell and Collings (2011) argued that to effectively manage talent (and by implications Talent as well), organisations should be more focused, rather than including every employee in the organisation. Workers within the organisation can be graded according to performance level (e.g. executive, leadership, high potential) (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012) and key positions (that is, ‘key players’ or ‘A players’) (Huselid et al., 2005, Michaels et al., 2001).

The question arises here is ‘*how do participating hotels identify talent?*’, and also ‘*whether all workers or some workers?*’ need to be included? *What qualities do these workers need to possess in order to be talent in the hospitality industry?* Therefore, the overall research question in this section is ‘*how is the concept of talent applied in the domain of hospitality industry?*’ — how is talent defined among participating hotels and what criteria are used to identify their quality?

2.5.1.3. Transferable versus context dependent

The other question that arises, when defining and identifying talent, is whether talent is ‘transferable’ or ‘dependent to the context’, The research sought to uncover answers to this question within the context of the hotel sector in Thailand.

From the ‘transferability’ perspective, talent is believed to be transferable knowledge, skills, and ability. A specialist in similar domain can apply their expertise across the context (Rappaport, Bancroft, and Okum (2003). This transfer is feasible based on the appropriateness of the new context to allow the talent to transfer their abilities (Meyers & Woerkom van, 2014; Stahl et al., 2012). By contrast the ‘context dependent’ perspective considers the ability of talent is dependent on the context. This view argues that talent is not transferable from the previous to the new organisational settlement (Groysberg et al. (2006, p. 92)

2.5.1.4. Talent is the sum of individual qualities: Competencies, commitment, and contribution

Talented workers are high performers who possess the competencies (required by the organisation), commitment to the organisation, and also have performances that are recognised by others (Michaels et al, 2001; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012).

While some of the qualities required of talented workers in the workplace are well understood, the researcher would like to clearly identify the qualities of talented workers within the context of the Thai hospitality industry. The reasons for focusing on these are: the uniqueness of the industry and the background of the Thai context.

2.5.2. Talent Retention: The Importance of Talent for Organisations and Industry

Talent is regarded as the most important resource for achieving organisational success (He, Li, and Keung Lai, 2011; Huselid et al, 2005; Lawler, 2005; 2008; Michaels et al; 2001). This is because they can contribute much better performance compared to their co-workers (Goleman, 2006; Iles et al, 2010; Lunn, 1992).

More-so for the hospitality industry, especially in hotel sector; it is customer oriented and relies heavily on labour to meet the customer satisfaction. Thus, there is a general consensus that the quality of employee performance is the most influential factor on customer satisfaction (see Lee et al., 2015 and He et al., 2011). Having the right talent or quality workers is one of the key elements for business success (He et al. (2011). This also appears to have a significant impact on customer repurchase intentions and customer loyalty. In the hospitality industry, customer experience of services is highly dependent upon personal interaction between employees and customers (Mullins, 1998). As facilities and amenities are duplicated from hotel to hotel, the positive attitude and behaviour of employee can contribute to a favourable impression of the hotel (Lovelock et al., 2005).

Since the hospitality industry is highly reliant on human resources, it therefore becomes imperative that they should pay a great deal of attention to the issue of employees, and in particular in the quality of its employees. One sure way is to identify, recruit and retain ‘talented’ employees. The recruitment and retention of ‘talent’ is also a function of managing employees’ expectations and satisfaction especially in the hotel industry where turnover of hotel employees tend to be very high (Mullins 1998). Thus, in this thesis, I will particularly focus on retaining talent.

2.5.2.1. Retention in Practice: Motivation and Drivers of Talent

Talented workers are unique individuals and therefore need to be treated differently from ordinary workers (e.g. Thorne & Pellant, 2008, p.81). Thus we have to understand what managers and owners of hotels identify as the drivers and motivation of their talent.

It is noted that in order to effectively retain talent, organisations have to consider among other things the career choices of talent and the needs of talent in order to encourage them to commit and stay with the organisation. These motivation techniques can be classified into extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivation is external compensation (e.g. money, promotion), while intrinsic motivations are related to talent’s personal fulfilment (e.g. recognition, praise feedback, participation in decision-making, etc.). It is concluded that in order to retain talent effectively, the organisation have to consider that the talented workers are driven by the combination of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. In the case of the hospitality industry extrinsic motivation plays a more important role in motivating and attracting talent (Allen, 2008; Björkman et al, 2013; Govaerts et al, 2011; Hughes and Rog, 2008; Lehmann, 2009; Thorne & Pellant, 2008).

However, as talented individuals are unique in the workforce they need to be treated differently from ‘normal’ workers, thus in the case of the hospitality industry we will investigate how Thai hotels motivate talent in order to keep them within the hotels.

2.5.2.2. Factor influencing talent retention

Both internal and external factors influence how organisations retain talent, and this includes definition of talent and retention practice (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Hudoyo, 2014; Minbaeva & Collings, 2013; Poldech & Pimonsangsuriya, 2012b; Siow, 2013).

- Internal Factors: such as organisational policy, image of organisation, nature of job image; organisational culture
- External Factors: such as labour force demographic decline, global economic condition and competitiveness, national culture.

The question here is what influences how talent is defined in hospitality industry and the way to retain them?

2.6. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Context and Hospitality Industry

The tourism industry (hospitality industry) is one of the largest economic industries in the world (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2014b). This is especially so in some developing countries such as Thailand. This thesis focuses on the hospitality industry, and more specifically on the hotel sector; and examines how hotels define and manage talent. The focus on this sector is motivated by the formation of AEC, and the threat that is likely to be posed to the Thai hotel sector.

This section will discuss the aims of the AEC (which was due to be fully introduced in 2015) and will briefly discuss how this may affect the Thai hotel sector. The section will initially present an overview of AEC. Then we will link AEC with the Thai tourism industry through discussing about Thailand — e.g. geography, climate, and culture. After that, we will focus on the importance of the tourism industry in general and how it contributes to the world economy; and more specifically focusing on the tourism industry in Thailand. This will be followed by a more specific focus on the hotel sector (which is the main sector

within the hospitality industry). The hotel sector is the focus of this research. Through this discussion, we will paint a picture of why this research focuses particularly on talented workers in this sector; and how the threat of AEC was the driver for the need to focus more on talented workers in Thailand.

2.6.1. The ASEAN Economic Community AEC and Its Membership

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) project is an economic integration scheme among ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) countries; and it aims to bring members to be one community. There have generally been concerns for many years about the likely effects of this scheme — for example, how this scheme will affect member nations (e.g. opportunities, threats, etc). In this section, we will discuss about the AEC scheme such as what it is and why it is important; and will also examine the potential threat that will be posed by the emergence of this economic block. We will also be more interested in how this project might influence the management of talent. It is also worth noting that this potential threat of AEC will form the basis and background to why the researcher is particularly interested in investigating the application of the concept talent in this area, and how they manage talented individuals in the Thai hotel sector.

In this section we therefore study why talent is needed in the hotel sector in light of the introduction of AEC, and how they are managed so as to be able to maintain and contribute to the international standard of service quality.

2.6.1.1. What is the (ASEAN Economic Community) AEC?

The idea of formulating AEC was initially conceived in an ASEAN summit held in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) in 1997. The aim was to create a single community comprising of three pillars: ASEAN Political-Security Community; ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The focus of this thesis is the impact of the introduction of AEC in Thailand.

The main goal of AEC was to transform the ASEAN region into a stable, prosperous, and highly competitive region with equitable economic development; and thus reduce poverty and socio-economic disparities (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2008; International Monetary Fund, 2015). Further deliberations followed in October 2003 during the Bali summit; and during that summit ASEAN leaders declared that AEC would be successful along with two other pillars — ASEAN Political-Security Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community; and these are expected to be completed by 2020 but to be in an advanced stage by 2015 (Siow, 2011). In 2006, the ASEAN ministers' meeting in Kuala Lumpur agreed to identify the characteristics, elements, and timeline of various measures; with an agreement on ASEAN member countries set to be confirmed by 2015. The plan of AEC was also affirmed by all leaders; and there was also commitment to accelerate the establishment of AEC by 2015 (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2008).

The main aim of AEC is to help the ASEAN community countries to become globally competitive. The stated objective is to “*transform ASEAN into a single market and production base, a highly competitive economic region, a region of equitable economic development, and a region fully integrated into the global economy*” (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2008). Through this program, it is envisaged that the 10 AEC member nations will benefit for the removal of trade and investment barriers; and this should in principle lead to increased intra-ASEAN trade. The establishment of a single marketing and production zone would in principle include the: freer flow of goods, freer flow of services, freer flow of investment, freer flow of capital, and freer flow of skilled labour (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2008).

The roadmaps for the implementation of AEC have been accelerated to 2015, heralding a new era of enhanced trade relations within the region. Within the 10 nations, their combined population is over 600 million people; which exceed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the European Union (EU) in populations. The ASEAN countries are namely: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Their combined economies account for nearly 5 per cent of the world GDP (Geiger, 2012). Comparisons have been made between AEC and the EU

but observers have argued that it is inappropriate to compare AEC with EU. This reason is that unlike the EU; *“the objective (of AEC) is neither a customs union (with common external commercial policy) nor a full common market (with free mobility of capital and labour and some policy harmonisation)”* (Siow, 2013, p. 11). Despite the fact that the objectives of AEC are to introduce free movement of goods, services, etc. there is however insufficient cross border freedoms. Therefore, more relevant laws about the equitable movement of labour need to be introduced and harmonised. While discussing ideas about the harmonisation of standards and technical regulations, Siow (2013, pp. 13-14) notes that a working group has been set-up to consider these things. The initial focus of this working group was to harmonise standards in priority sectors; which were accountancy, engineering, surveying, architecture, nursing, medical services, dental services, and tourism.

2.6.1.2. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Challenges and Threats

While it is anticipated that the introduction of AEC will lead to increased opportunities and markets, there will also be unavoidable challenges and problems. Thus, for example, the creation of a single market will lead to higher competition within the domestic market, among the ASEAN nations, and across the world. Another example of a challenge that might arise due to the introduction of AEC is language barriers. For example, there are countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore who share a common language and these countries will likely enjoy more benefits than others will. In addition, despite English language being the formal language of communicating within ASEAN countries, there are countries like Singapore and the Philippines who already use English as their formal language, and would thus get a head-start compared to other countries such as Thailand. Not only is there a diversity of language there are also differences in terms of culture, religion, and beliefs. Therefore, countries such as Thailand and both domestic and international organisations will need to think and act globally to curb the potential threats from AEC. Therefore, this section will discuss some of challenges and threats that arise due to the introduction of AEC as follows:

- **Demographic changes:** The world and ASEAN nation's population is forecast to decline within the next 30 years; and in fact the working population of Thailand is projected to rank bottom among the ASEAN countries by 2030 (International Monetary Fund, 2015).
- **Knowledge based society:** Knowledge based economies are expected to become extremely important. Therefore, organisations have to prepare for this change.
- **International mobility of labour:** Generally, there is increased mobility of labour. This is expected to increase with the free flow of labour within the ASEAN. This trend will create opportunities and threats. For example, the wealthier countries will get more benefit from this scheme. Meanwhile, there might be a brain drain (drainage of educated and skilled personnel) from less developed countries (e.g. Thailand) to more developed countries (such as Singapore and Malaysia). This view is supported by Tung (2007) and Tung and Lazarova (2006), who note that labour will be more willing to work outside their country of origin compared to their home countries if the conditions are better. Consequently, home countries like Thailand might face a brain drain to the more developed and higher income countries like Singapore and Malaysia (Hudoyo, 2014; Poldech & Pimolsangsuriya, 2012b; Siow, 2013). The brain drain will likely be one of the most serious negative impact of the creation of AEC among the less developed countries. Thus, hotels might need to decide where they want to be located and if they will modify their human resource strategies accordingly to attract, motivate, and retain their talent.

In addition, the factors that are fuelling skilled labour mobility among the ASEAN countries include:

- Large disparities in wages and employment opportunities;
- Geographic proximity and socio-cultural-linguistic environment;
- Disparities in educational developments.

As more ASEAN countries move up the technological ladder, liberalising trade in goods and services and in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is creating more demand for a larger pool of professional and skilled labour. Until such a time that, the domestic educational and training institutions are able to supply the necessary highly skilled manpower, countries will still continue to depend on foreign talent or export talent (Siow, 2013; Siow Yue, 2011). The Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) is one of the major instruments for

facilitating skilled labour mobility in ASEAN countries. It plays the role of a professional body of skills and qualifications accreditation. MRAs help ASEAN countries to recognise the education or experience obtained in foreign countries; acting as a licensing or certification body.

The introduction of the AEC agreement superseded the Free Trade Area (FTA). It is noted that the FTA, like any other trade agreement, resulted in winners (such as businesses, investors, workers, and consumers that gain directly from liberalisation and integration) and losers (businesses and workers that face intensified competition from foreign suppliers, investors, and professionals) within the member countries. For example, Siam Cement, one of Thailand's largest conglomerates, is geared-up to spend 75 per cent of its \$5-billion (£3.3 billion) investment budget for 2012-2016 to acquire assets in many ASEAN countries. Similarly, Runckel & Associates, an International Business Consulting company, and other large companies such as CP or BGH are doing the same (Runckel, 2012). Thus, AEC will create more equitability of economic development through liberalisation of the goods sector, services sector, investment, etc., and the mobility of skilled labour across ASEAN countries.

Finally, the other factor that organisations have to be aware of is cultural diversity. The single market will have a population of over 600 million people covering 10 countries. While the label of ASEAN countries sounds as if there is uniformity, however, the reality is that there are many cultural differences and language differences as well.

Therefore, the next section will give the background of the study through focusing on Thailand, its culture and the important role that the hospitality industry (and hotel sector) plays in Thai economic development.

2.7. The National Context: Thailand, Tourism and the Hotel Sector

This section details the background of the research by focusing on Thailand, its culture and the important role that the hospitality industry (and hotel sector) plays in Thai economic development. Section 2.7.1 focuses on the 'geography, climate & politics' of Thailand, and

how these influence the hotel sector. Meanwhile, section 2.7.2 gives a cultural insight into Thailand, while section 2.7.3 focus on the Thai labour market, and finally Section 2.7.4 focus on the Thai hotel sector.

2.7.1. Thailand: Geography, Climate and Politics

The Kingdom of Thailand, previously known as ‘Siam’ until 1939, is located in Southeast Asia (Figure 2.8); and shares borders with Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Malaysia. Its location as the hub of the region positively creates business opportunities for the nation; and thus for example in 2012, the capital city.



Figure 2.7: Map of Thailand

(Source: Asia Web Direct (2012) <http://www.thailand-maps.com/south-east-asia-map.htm>)

Bangkok was the most frequently used airport for connecting flights among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region (see Table 2.7). It accounted for 95 direct

flight connections to destinations outside ASEAN, followed by Singapore (77), and Kuala Lumpur (63) (Geiger, 2012). As a result of this ease of commuting, due to multiple connecting flights from worldwide, has not only attracted an increase in travellers and investors coming to Thailand has boosted the national economy.

Country of arrival city	Departure city									
	Bangkok, Thailand	Singapore	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Manila, Philippines	Jakarta, Indonesia	Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam	Yangon, Myanmar	Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam	Phnom Penh, Cambodia	Vientiane, Lao PDR
Brunei Darussalam	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Cambodia	2	2	2	—	—	2	1	—	2	1
Indonesia	4	16	14	1	35	1	—	2	—	—
Lao PDR	3	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	1	8
Malaysia	2	11	15	2	3	1	1	5	2	1
Myanmar	1	1	1	—	—	1	9	—	1	—
Philippines	2	4	2	36	1	1	—	1	—	—
Singapore	1	—	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Thailand	23	6	6	1	2	1	2	1	2	2
Vietnam	2	3	3	2	1	19	2	—	1	1
Australia	4	6	6	4	3	2	—	1	—	—
China	17	20	12	6	6	5	3	2	4	1
India	9	11	8	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Japan	4	4	2	4	1	4	—	—	—	—
Korea, Rep.	3	1	1	2	1	2	—	—	1	1
United Arab Emirates	3	2	2	2	2	—	—	1	—	—
United States	1	2	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	54	31	32	11	8	11	2	4	3	2
Total non-stop routes	136	122	109	75	66	52	23	18	18	18
<i>of which to ASEAN</i>	18	45	31	8	10	9	7	10	8	6
<i>of which domestic</i>	23	—	15	36	35	19	9	—	2	8

Table 2.7: Direct routes from capital cities of ASEAN countries

(Source: Geiger, 2012 p.16)

Thailand is not only situated in a good location that attracts visitors across the world, but it also has a variety of natural resources. Thailand naturally divides into four regions which also attract visitors. The regions are as follows:

- 1) The mountains and forests of the North;
- 2) The vast rice fields of the Central Plains;
- 3) The semi-arid farm lands of the Northeast plateau;
- 4) The tropical islands and long coastline of the peninsula South

The climate of Thailand is also one of the attractions of the country. It is generally hot and humid across most of the country throughout the year, although it is punctuated by tropical monsoons. From May to September, the southwest experiences tropical rain and warm weather with monsoons, while the northeast has dry and cool weather in November to March and is hot and humid in the south of the country (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014). Therefore, the geographical convenience of Thailand, its natural resources, and good climate makes it an attractive tourist destination. In turn tourism helps support the economy of Thailand, and thus makes it a stable country economically (Bank of Thailand, 2014).

Meanwhile, the political situation in Thailand has not always been stable over the last century. A constitutional monarchy was formed during the 1932 bloodless revolution. A constitutional monarchy was formed with the head of the country King Bhumibol Adulyadej and royal family who are highly revered by most Thais. However, this has not prevented several political turmoils that have blighted Thailand since 2005. For example, the country experienced a military coup in 2006 and the country has faced unstable political situations such as the change of Prime Ministers and large-scale street protests in 2008, 2009 and 2010 and further political unrest in 2013 and 2014. From the researcher's point of view, it would be fascinating to find-out how the country can deal with constant political changes and the introduction of the single ASEAN community market.

2.7.2. Thailand and Cultural Insights

The Kingdom of Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country, which has never been colonised by a European power. 'Thai' means 'land of freedom, and it also is affectionately known as the "land of smile". Unlike neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia, the Thais are unique in that they have never been colonised by any western countries (Lewis, 2000). Under the Kingdom of Thailand, it comprises of three ethnic groups; the largest group is Thais (75%), followed by Chinese (14%) and then others (11%) (Wiebusch, 2014).

Culture is the combination of almost all aspects of society. Burnard and Naiyapatana (2004, p. 756) referred to culture as the combination of "*knowledge, belief, morals, laws, customs*

and any other attributes acquired by a person as a member of society.” Thus, to have better understanding about human beings it is unavoidable to include culture in that particular area and society of the study. Culture is dynamic and changeable. For example, Burnard and Naiyapatana (2004, p. 756) stated that “*no society or community is static*” and “*no one wants to live in a museum*”. Thus, in this research, it is appropriate to briefly explain and discuss the culture of Thailand and this background information is intended to provide a basis for understanding the attitude of Thais.

Thai culture is unique and complex (Pimpa, 2012). It is mostly shaped by religion with the official religions of Thailand being Buddhism (94.6%), followed by Islam (4.6%) and Christianity (0.7%) (Wiebusch, 2014). Buddhism plays a pivotal role in Thailand and thus directly impacts on Thai culture. One interesting teaching of Buddhism is consideration and sincere sacrifices to others and is attributed to the Thais being friendly and helpful to others. The well-known slogan about Thailand as ‘land of smile’ reflects that context well. However, Thai smiles have different meanings within different contexts. Tuohy (2013) categorised the Thai smile (‘Yim’) as follows:

- ‘*Yim thang taa*’ — the ‘I am so happy’ smile
- ‘*Yim thak tai*’ — the polite smile for someone you barely know.
- ‘*Yim cheun chom*’ — the ‘I admire you’ smile
- ‘*Feun Yim*’ — the stiff smile, also known as the ‘I should laugh at the joke although it’s not funny’ smile
- ‘*Yim mee lessanai*’ — the smile that masks something wicked in your mind.
- ‘*Yim yaw*’ — the teasing, or ‘I told you so’ smile
- ‘*Yim haeng*’ — the dry smile, also known as the ‘I know I owe you the money but I don’t have it’ smile
- ‘*Yim thak thaen*’ — the ‘I disagree with you’ smile, also known as the ‘you can go ahead and propose it but your idea’s no good’ smile
- ‘*Yim cheua cheuan*’ — the ‘I am the winner’ smile, the smile give to a losing competitor
- ‘*Yim soo*’ — the smile in the face of an impossible struggle’ smile

- '*Yim mai awk*' — the 'I am trying to smile but can't smile' (Tuohy, 2013, pp. 13-14).

There are also widely recognised Thai cultural norms. Kamoche (2000, p. 455) noted that these norms emphasises harmonious living. The qualities identified are as follows:

- '*krengja*' involves the desire to be self-effacing, respectful, humble and considerate, and a wish to avoid embarrassing others.
- '*bunkhun*' is about the reciprocity of goodness, showing kindness, giving and obtaining favours.
- '*jai yen*' or 'cool heart' is about calmness, patience, and the need to maintain harmony in social situations
- '*mai pen rai*' is a common expression which is used in all sorts of situations to mean '*it doesn't matter*', '*never mind*', etc. It is about being forgiving, avoiding causing offence, and not serious on any situations.
- '*sanuk*' means fun, relaxation, but also signifies the importance of amiable, social relations and goodwill towards others
- '*numjai*' means being concern to others.

Thai living and culture directly influences how they manage people and how they are managed. From the human resources department's point-of-view, it is better that they understand Thai culture as this will result in improved and effective management of the personnel in the Thai labour force.

We conclude that the history, culture and political situation have affected the Thai economy and more-so the hospitality industry which relies heavily on these factors. The researcher has included this background research in order to discover how all these cultural events and aspects may have an impact on the economy. It is the researcher's belief that these would have a bearing on the economic performance of the labour force in the context of the Thailand labour market.

2.7.3. Thailand and the Labour Market

As discussed in the previous section, there is an anticipation that the introduction of AEC would lead to more competition for labour within Thailand. It is also anticipated that this will create more diversity for example, diverse languages, cultures, resources, etc. in the ASEAN region. Therefore, organisations, and more-so their human resource departments, will have to prepare themselves, so as to cope with the diversities of culture, and be competitive in the labour market.

For today's organisations such as hotels, the main challenge is 'how to recruit and manage talented workers?' Indeed, many organisations in Thailand consider the lack of talent as the main challenge that they face and that will also hinder their success (Poldech & Pimolsangsuriya, 2012a). Thus, organisations have to find ways of recruiting and retaining talent effectively. Similarly, a survey by Orchid Slingshot HR Consultancy Company found that HR departments regard talent management and managing talent to be among the top four issues in Thailand (Poldech & Pimolsangsuriya, 2012a).

Although severe economic crisis in 1997 and 2008, political uncertainties in 2010 and 2014 and floods in late 2011 all affected Thailand, in the past few years the country has reported that it has made significant progress in fostering economic development, and in the past decade, it had a stable macro-economic situation (International Labour Organisation, 2013). However, as a result of the stable economic situation, Thailand has experienced a significant share of employment, which has also resulted in emerging labour shortages in some sectors. The stability of the economy has also made it an attractive destination for migrant workers from neighbouring countries, but many Thais look outside Thailand for work in both ASEAN countries such as Singapore which offers higher wages and outside ASEAN countries such as the US, Australia, etc. (International Labour Organisation, 2013). Therefore, the free movement of labour in ASEAN countries may mean more competition and fighting for the best in bigger markets. As part of the aspiration of AEC, it is an establishment of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) designated body. The function of the designated MRA body would be to evaluate and agree standard

certification levels. This would also increase movement of labour as qualifications offered in one country would become recognised regionally.

According to the Labour Force Survey of 2010 (International Labour Organisation, 2013) 38.7 million people were employed in Thailand; and the main sectors were: the agriculture and fishery sector (15.7 million); manufacturing sector (5.2 million); and the services sector (17.7 million). The major employer in the services sector was the hospitality industry.

Despite the seemingly good employment statistics in Thailand, the Bank of Thailand (2014) predicted some challenges and problems in the years ahead. For example, the labour market is expected to tighten; with the labour shortages including quality and quantity becoming an issue that will affect businesses in every sector nationwide. Some of the factors expected to cause the national labour shortage are an aging population due to continued low fertility rate; the slow-down of labour productivity compared to other countries in the region; and labour-skills mismatch. The report also noted that the last factor was mainly caused by the fact that most Thai students do not study in the fields that experience shortages (Bank of Thailand, 2014). There has also been an outcry that this generation of workers has misplaced social values and distorted wage demands.

Thus to be ready to enter the AEC scheme, organisations need to be able to deal with some of the above issues effectively. They need to have employees who possess the right skills that will enable the business to succeed. Within the AEC environment, talent has to be clearly defined and identified. For instance, Siow (2011) defined talent in AEC to be the professional and highly skilled labour. The professional areas include accountancy, engineering, surveying, architecture, nursing, medical services, dental services, and tourism (Siow, 2011). As previously discussed, the standards for individuals within these professional bodies will be defined and controlled through the MRA.

The challenge, therefore, for the workforce and especially the younger generation is to possess skills and knowledge that the ‘knowledge based societies’ seek and demand. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that the new generations should possess the following qualities in

order to establish a sustainable employability advantage: international perspective (e.g. understanding international languages, ethics, beliefs, and attitude of different generations); integrated knowledge (that is, multi-skills); innovative capacity; and integrity (Foreign Office of Thailand, 2015). For the new generation in Thailand, this becomes an important ‘target’ or goal if they are to compete with other employees within the AEC.

From the diversities among ASEAN members point of view; organisations might look to harness this as an opportunity for their business success. Not surprisingly, Poldech and Pimolsangsuriya (2012b) concluded that organisations need employees who possess English language skills (as this will be the formal language among ASEAN countries); management development; computer skills; multinational operation; and cultural diversity. It is anticipated that one of the labour movement trends will be that those with high skills will move to wealthier countries. Therefore, the main challenge for organisations will be to be able to protect themselves from losing their important talented and skilled employees. According to Poldech and Pimolsangsuriya (2012b), this challenge rests squarely with the HR departments, with HR planning needing to focus on creating a decent business culture environment, creating strategies to attract and retain talent, developing employee engagement, developing English language skills, and developing managers and the executive team to be ready for changes and competition.

2.7.4. Thailand: Tourism and the Hotel Sector

The tourism industry is one of the world’s largest and fastest growing industries (Barron, 2008); and thus the world’s economies rely heavily on this industry. The number of workers in the tourism industry has been increasing steadily over the last decade (see Figure 2.8) (International Monetary Fund, 2015); with tourism being the main driver of the Thai economy over the last few years. Furthermore, the report by the World Travel & Tourism Council (2014b) indicated that this industry directly and indirectly contributes more than six million jobs (15.4% of total employees) globally. This figure projected to rise to almost nine million jobs in 2024. The growth in employment figures in this industry means that

there is also a continuous growth in demand for employees (Barron, 2008), and increased pressure on the hiring organisations.

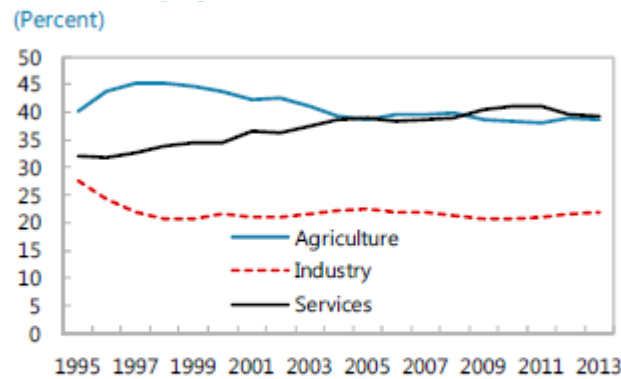


Figure 2.8: Thailand: Employment Shares
(Source: International Monetary Fund, 2015)

The tourism industry has become an important engine of growth for the Thai economy over the years (Bank of Thailand, 2014). The number of tourists rose across all regions, especially from China, Russia and other ASEAN countries. Altogether, a record of 26.7 million tourists visited Thailand in 2014. This trend could be attributed to the rising tension between China and Japan over the last few years and also due to the increase in the number of low-cost airlines, which has helped improve convenience and reduce the cost of travelling (Bank of Thailand, 2014). However, the number of tourists declined towards the end of the year, particularly those from China, which followed a change in China's tourism laws, the introduction of more stringent regulations on low-cost tour packages, and also due to the impact of Thailand's political situation (Bank of Thailand, 2014, p.5). Although the immediate effect of the political unrest was an initial drop in the number of tourists, the overall number of tourists have not been dramatically affected. In fact, the number of visitors rebounded and continued to increase due to the trust that the Thai government could control the situation. The statistics reported by the Bank of Thailand indicated that tourist arrivals in Thailand increased to 2,309,250 in May of 2015 from 2,289,600 in April of 2015. And despite the political turmoil in the first quarter of 2014, the number of tourist arrivals

reached the highest in December 2014 at 2,841,330 between 1997 and 2015 (Trading Economics, 2015).

Table 2.8 shows the distribution of tourists into Thailand, according to source continents and country, respectively. East Asia and Europe are the main contributors of tourists in Thailand, and this has been the pattern over the last three years, with East Asia contributing more than 50 percent of the tourists in each of the last three years. The other more interesting statistic is that the growth from East Asia has been rising greatly compared to the rest of the other continents. This indicates that the East Asia market has become an increasing more important source.

Country	Change (percent)		Share (percent)	
	2012	2013	2012	2013
East Asia	21.1	28.5	56.0	60.2
- Malaysia *	2.2	17.3	11.4	11.2
- China	61.9	68.8	12.5	17.6
- Japan	21.8	12.0	6.1	5.8
- Korea	15.6	11.5	5.2	4.9
- Laos *	9.4	13.3	4.4	4.1
- Singapore *	21.8	12.7	3.7	3.5
Europe	10.8	11.6	25.3	23.6
- Russia	24.9	31.9	5.9	6.5
- United Kingdom	3.3	3.8	3.9	3.4
The Americas	13.7	8.0	4.8	4.4
South Asia	11.1	4.6	5.8	5.0
- India	10.7	3.6	4.5	3.9
Oceania	12.1	-1.7	4.7	3.8
Middle East	0.7	3.6	2.7	2.3
Africa	12.8	5.5	0.7	0.6

Table 2.8: Tourist classified by nationality

(*Source:* Bank of Thailand 2014, p.28)

The growth in the number of tourists has led to increased receipts. These increased receipts have greatly contributed to the rise of export services and real GDP. Thus, for example, there has been a rise in export services and real GDP in the first three quarters of the year 2013, by 25 percent year-on-year, which is the highest in a decade. Tourist arrivals in 2013 increased by 22 percent year-on-year in the first three quarters of the year, although, there was a significant slowdown in tourist arrivals in the last quarter of 2013, growing by only 10.7 percent year-on-year. This was partly due to China announcing new tourism laws and the political unrest that broke out at the end of October in Bangkok. Nevertheless, tourist arrivals in 2013 were at a record high of over 26 million (Report of World bank, 2014; Bhaopichitr & Thitisakmongkol, 2014).

In 2014, the expectations were that the tourism sector would grow at a slower pace, owing to the impact from the political situation and other factors discussed above such as China's new tourism laws. However, projections into the coming years indicate that Thailand's tourism was expected to rebound rapidly once the political situation was resolved thanks to the hotel sector's strengths and strong potentials.

Since the hospitality industry plays an important role in Thai economic development and the hotel sector is the main sector in this industry, thus focus will be on the hotel sector. As discussed earlier, the introduction of the AEC is expected to bring some benefits and threats. To cope with the threats and at the same time take advantage of the benefits, the country and organisations within it have to be prepared for this introduction. The main preparation should be to consider the quality of the labour force and especially the good performers with talent. This is the suggestion of the research report on the quality of Thai skilled labour which was conducted by the Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University. Their conclusion was that the country and industry needs to have adequate quality workers so as to maintain international standard (Foreign Office of Thailand, 2015). It is the attention of the author, therefore, to study how the talent is needed in the hotel sector in light of the introduction of AEC, and how they are managed so as to be able to maintain and contribute to the international standard.

2.8. Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter presented the literature review. It reviewed the concept of talent and the challenges of managing talent in the hospitality industry in Thailand and examined the likely impacts of the introduction of AEC on how talented workers are managed? The chapter included the conceptual framework of talent, and background information — background of talent in the hospitality industry; background to the study within the context of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) context; and the Thailand national context.

2.8.1. Summary of the Sources in the Literature Review and Conceptual Framework for the Empirical Research

The first part of the literature review presented the different definitions and identification criteria of talent. The definition starts-off by tracing the origins of the term talent. It then details how the term is identified (e.g. Is it natural ability or acquired? Is it some workers or all workers? Is it transferable or context dependent?). The section also explores how the concept fits within the specific context of the hospitality industry. The research aimed to identify gaps and issues of defining talent, and those gaps are summarised and illustrated in the table below.

Authors	Context	Categories	Research Gap
Berger and Berger (2011, p. 4)	General context	Leadership	<p>1). There is no consensus on the definition and approach of talent</p> <p>2) There is doubt on how the term talent is used in the hospitality industry; which need to be clarified.</p> <p>3) There is a lack of clarity on the use of the term talent in the Eastern countries context (such as Thailand); which need to be clarified</p>
CIPD (2007, p. 3)	View from HR research	High performer / high potential	
Cheese et al. (2008, p. 46)	Executives views of the organisation in the United States, Europe and Australia.	High competence	
Dries (2013, pp. 278-280) and Thunnissen and Arensbergen (2015, pp. 182-183)	Philological, and university departments	<p>Summarise 5 approaches on identifying talent</p> <p>1.Object and subject</p> <p>2. Some/ all worker</p> <p>3. Innate/ acquired ability</p> <p>4. Input or output approaches</p> <p>5. Transferable/ context-dependent ability or skills</p>	
Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013, p. 297)	General context based on the academic literature	<p>Summarise 2 approaches on identifying talent</p> <p>-Object approach</p> <p>-Subject approach</p>	
Huselid et al. (2005, p.112)	General context based on cases of organisation	'A' players or high performers	
Lewis and Heckman (2009, p. 141)	Leadership context based on the literature review	High performer and high potential	
Lehmann (2009, p.157)	General service industry in Malaysia and Thailand	Set of competencies to make change in the organisation	
Lunn (1992, p. 25)	General context	High performer	
Mallick and Saini (2013)	Entrepreneurial students on entrepreneurial talent	Entrepreneurial knowledge and skills	
Michaels et al. (2001, p. xiii)	IT and automobile sector and most is in the USA	High competences/ abilities	

Morton and Ashton (2005, p. 29)	Electronic commerce and payment services in the US	Leadership and potential workers	
Poowittayapan (2007)	General context in Thailand	Leadership style of someone with high competence; high performance ; and high potential	
Silzer and Dowell (2010, pp. 13-14)	Industrial-organisational psychology and human resource professional in general	High competence from the individual/group related to the job	
Silzer and Dowell (2010 p. 75)	Industrial-organisational psychology and human resource professional in general	High competence and contribution to the organisation/ work achievement	
Tansley et al. (2007, p. 8)	Human resource perspective in general context in the UK	Some worker with high performance and high potential	
Ulrich and Smallwood (2012, p. 60)	General context in the USA	competence × commitment × contribution	
Uygulamasi (2014, p. 6236)	General context from the literature review	High competence and potential	

Table 2.9 The Summary of the Definition of Talent and the Research Gap

The second part of the chapter discusses managing talent; and is developed from the theory of talent management (TM). It focuses on the barriers to managing talent in the hospitality industry; and specifically focuses on the challenges of talent turnover (which is one of the most important barriers). Moreover, this part presents talent retention (motivation), best practises in talent retention, and the factors that influence/effect the talent retention.

In this part, gap identified through the research led the researcher to investigate how the hospitality industry manage and retain their talent.

In particular, the following conclusions were drawn:

- 1) There is high turnover of talent

- 2) This makes talent retention a very important concept, but many organisations are not aware of ‘talent retention’ strategies.
- 3) There is lack of research on talent management particularly retaining talent in hospitality industry. This raises the need to focus on this as the main issues of the context
- 4) There is lack of research on talent management in the Eastern context, and the study of the western context may not suit for all settlements.

The final part of the chapter reviewed the study context. During the review of the background of the hospitality industry in Thailand, we explore the background of the country, and particularly focused on the hotel sector in Thailand. This included the culture and the labour market. Furthermore, a discussion about the introduction of the AEC was also presented and explored how the introduction of AEC might impact talent and talent management. This background information was presented to justify or demonstrate the importance of conducting research and also to give the research a context.

From the literature review, the researcher draws the picture illustrated in Figure 2.9 below. The illustration starts by showing the idea of researching on the concept or definition of the talent, and then it discusses the talent management concept (managing talent and specifically focus on talent retention). Moreover, talent and talent management in hospitality industry was also clarified. We then consider talent and talent management in hospitality industry which would be reflected by the context of AEC and Thailand.

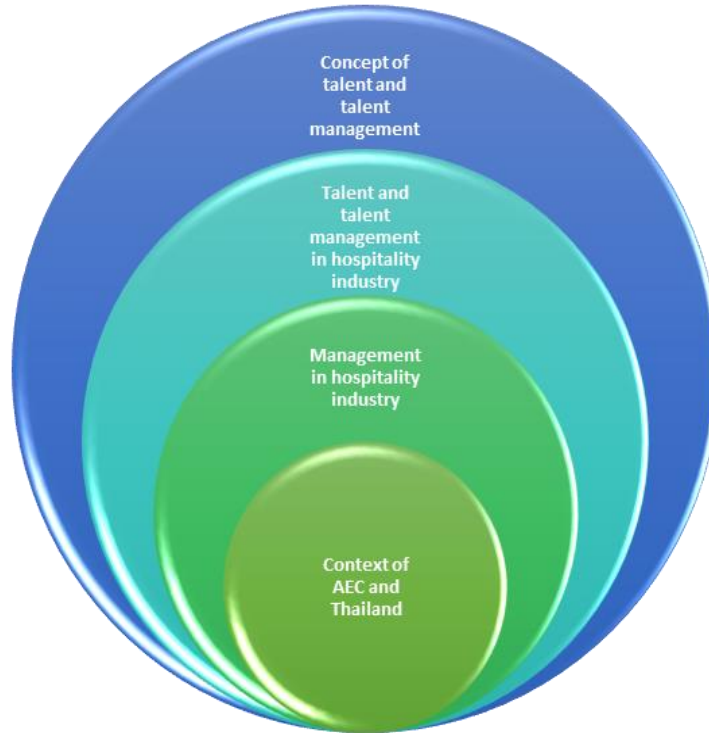


Figure 2.9: The Conceptual Framwork

Therefore, in the literature review we aware of difference angle of the secondary research related to talent and talent management in general; and in hospitality industry it could be implemented in hospitality industry. More so, it focuses at how the impact of AEC and Thailand which make talent management to be one of the most important strategy for business advancement and for remaining competitive.

Furthermore, the review of literate in this chapter will help in designing the research methodology, discussed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will present the research methodology used in this thesis. The thesis investigated the application of the concept of talent within the Thai hospitality industry. The thesis also investigated how the Thai hospitality industry manages talent; and is based on hotels that are members of the Thailand hotel association (THA). The research is based on the research questions arising from the literature review in Chapter 2.

Collis and Hussey (2009, p. 73) described a research methodology as “*an approach to the process of the research, encompassing a body of methods.*” Meanwhile, Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar, and Newton (2002, p. 17) described it as “*a process of enquiry and investigation; systematic and methodical, and its aim is to increase knowledge.*” Silverman (2005) notes that the methodology encompasses, among other things, choices of what to study, methods of gathering data, and methods of analysing the data; and is therefore an explanation of how we go about studying a phenomenon. Since the research has to be systematically designed, it should therefore cover an appropriate research philosophy, an appropriate approach strategy and appropriate research methods (Leitch, Hill, & Harrison, 2009). This chapter is no exception in terms of meeting those requirements, and will also discuss in detail how the research was designed and adapted, the data collection approach, and ethical issues that arise thereof.

The methodology of this research is influenced by the following; study aim and specific objectives; questions emerging; approaches to social research - research philosophy and paradigm approaches and issues relating to quantitative and qualitative research and identifying an appropriate ontological and epistemological position; choice of data collection methods; issues of validity and reliability, data analysis and interpretation; ‘real world research’ in practice, conducting empirical case studies and field work,

identifying practical and ethical issues – confidentiality. Other considerations included Entre and leaving the field.

3.2. The Research Questions, Study Aims and Objectives

This section presents the main research questions and aims and objectives of this research, and addresses gaps that have been identified during the literature review. Thus, the following are the research questions for this thesis:

1. How is talent defined among the participating hotels?
2. What are the criteria used to identify talented workers?
3. What are the factors that influence how talented workers are identified?
4. What challenges are faced by hotels when managing talent?
5. How do participating hotels within THA manage talent in order to cope with the challenges?

In addition to the research questions, the aims and objectives are also a guide for the researcher while conducting the empirical research as follows:

Aim

The general aim of this study is to explore and critically review available literature and identify gaps in empirical research relating to the concept of talent and talent management, and critically investigate the understanding and application of talent management within the hospitality industry and specifically the hotels sector in Thailand and the implications for retention of talented workers in the hotel sector in relation to the emerging regional context of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Objectives:

1. To critically investigate and determine how the concept of talent applies in the hospitality industry;

2. To evaluate critically how participating hotels manage talents; and
3. To conceptualise the application of the concept of talent used among hotels, and how talent is managed.

Meanwhile, the specific methodology, including research paradigm, research approach, qualitative and quantitative research methods, research strategy that is used in this research is explained below.

The research was conducted using a stage process (See figure 3.1), and the details of what each stage entailed are presented below (and further elaborated in Section 3.8).

Primary study

The research will be a study involving 29 hotels that are members of THA to get a more in-depth understanding of the concept of talent and talent management within the context of the Thai hospitality industry. The research will select different data sources (semi-structured interviews, observations and documentary analysis) and subject them to analysis using different data collection techniques for triangulation. The problem is approached from different angles thereby incorporating a more valid conclusion.

The primary study stage aimed to answer the following questions:

- 1) How is talent defined among the participating hotels?*
- 2) What are the criteria used to identify talented workers?*
- 3) What are the factors that influence how talented workers are identified?*
- 4) What challenges are faced by hotels when managing talent?*
- 5) How do participating hotels within THA manage talent in order to cope with the challenges?*

Figure 3.1 presents outline of the research, and it shows that the research is split into two stages.

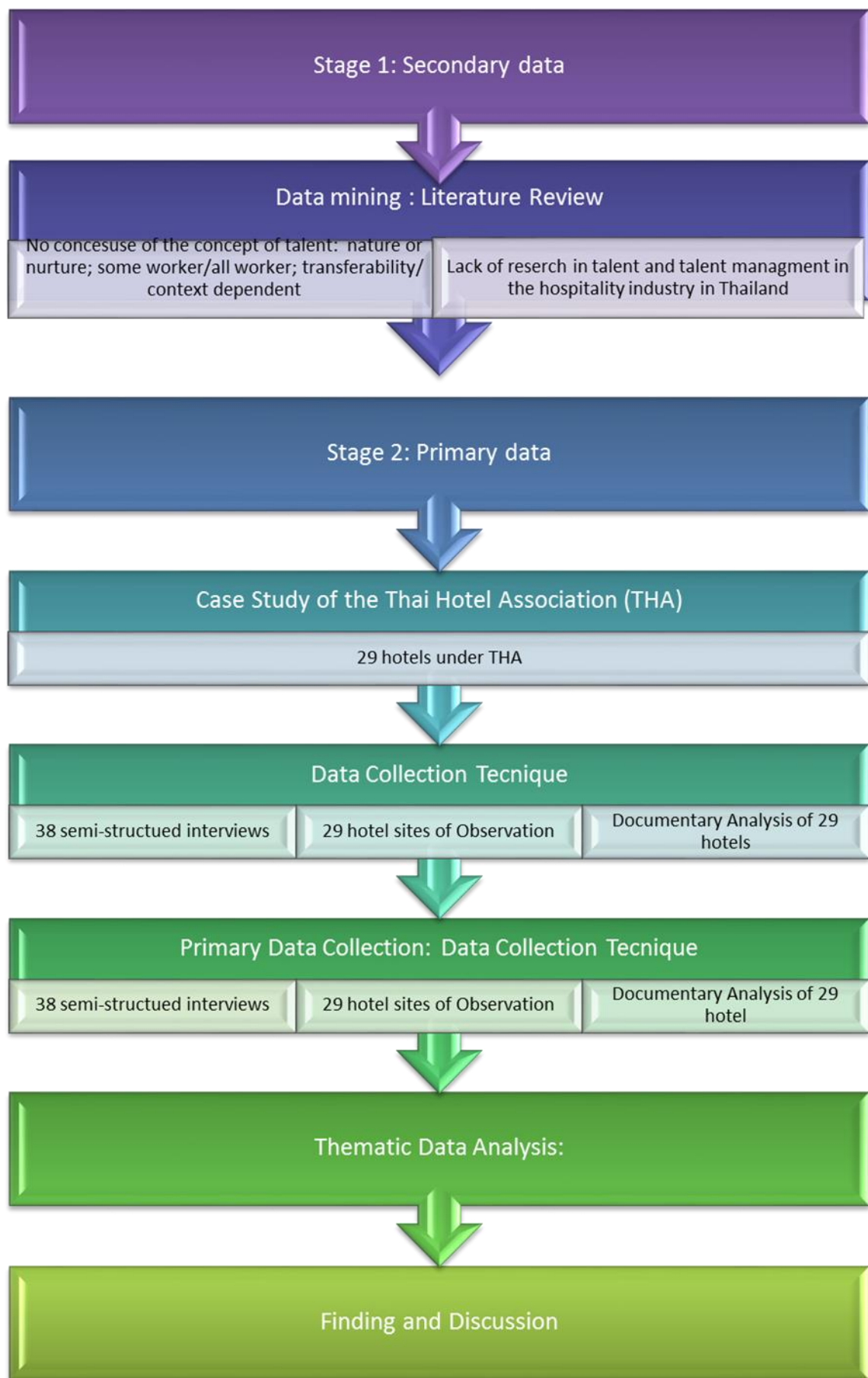


Figure 3.1: Outline of the Research Structure

3.3. Research Paradigms for Exploring Social Reality: A Critical Review

Scientific research is rooted in a conceptual framework through which the researcher works, and this conceptual framework is “*a set of linked assumptions about the world which is shared by a community of scientists investigating that world*” (Deshpande, 1983, p.101, as cited in Healy & Perry, 2000, p. 118). This ‘scientific community’s world-view’ (or research paradigm) is defined as a “*shared understandings of reality*” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003); and makes assumptions about the following:

- The nature and existence of reality (ontology assumptions).
- The relationship between that reality and the researcher - How do we know the world? (Epistemology assumptions)
- Methodology – the technique used by the researcher to investigate the reality.

These three elements form the basis of the conceptual framework. Thus, the ‘conceptual framework’ (or ‘research paradigm’) is the philosophy about reality and the nature of knowledge, which has changed over the time (Collis & Hussey, 2009). This philosophical concept helps the researcher to clearly construct the research design — research approach, research strategy and research methods (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2014; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Consequently, researchers have to be familiar with philosophical concepts (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008), and this helps them choose an appropriate framework for developing a good research project.

However, there is no right or wrong research paradigm per se — this is all dependent on the ‘researcher’s presumptions’, and the need to fit within the researcher’s values (Sobh & Perry, 2006). As indicated above, the three main facets of research paradigms are questions about ‘reality’ (ontological assumptions), ‘knowledge’ (epistemological assumptions) and ‘how we gain knowledge about the world’ (methodological assumptions). Table 3.1 illustrates the four main research paradigms and the assumptions associated with each approach.

Research assumption	Positivism	Critical theory	Interpretivism/Constructivism	Realism
Ontological assumptions (<i>the nature of reality which is investigated</i>)	Reality is real and apprehensible. Reality is objective and singular — i.e. separate from the researcher	“Virtual” reality shaped by social, economic, ethic, political, cultural, and gender values, crystalised over time	Reality is subjective and multiple and specific constructed realities — i.e. as seen by the participant	Reality is ‘real’ or ‘exist’ but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehensible.
Epistemological assumptions (<i>what constitutes valid knowledge — the relationship between the reality and the researcher</i>)	Objectivist: The finding is true, researcher is objective by viewing reality through a one-way mirror. Researcher is independent of the subject being researched	Subjective: Value mediated findings, researcher is a transformative intellectual who changes the social world for example, action research and participant observation	Subjective: Created findings, researcher is a passionate participant within the world being investigated. Researcher interacts with what is being researched	Modified objectivist: Finding probably true, researcher is value-aware and needs to triangulate any perceptions that he or she is collecting
Methodological assumptions (<i>the process of research — technique uses by the researcher</i>)	Mainly concerns with a testing of theory. Thus mainly quantitative methods such as surveys, experiments, and verification of hypotheses Process is deductive study of cause and effect with a static design (categories are isolated beforehand). Research is context free. Generalisation needed for production, explanation and understanding. Results are accurate and reliable through validity and reliability.	Dialogic/dialectical: researcher is a transformative intellectual who changes the social world within which participants live (e.g. action research, participant observation)	Hermeneutical/dialectical: researcher is a passionate participant within the world being investigated (e.g. in-depth unstructured interviews, participant observation, grounded theory research). Process is an inductive study of mutual simultaneous shaping of factors with an emerging design (categories are identified during the process). Research is context bound. Patterns and/or theories are developed for understanding. Findings are accurate and reliable through verification	Mainly qualitative method such as studies/convergent interviewing; triangulation and interpretation.

Table 3.1: Main Research Paradigms and assumptions

(*Source:* Adapted from Collis and Hussey (2009, p. 58) ; Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 109) ; Healy and Perry (2000, p. 119) ; and Sobh and Perry (2006, p. 1195)

From Table 3.1, we note that there are ‘huge’ differences between positivism and the other three research paradigms. As noted by Healy and Perry (2000, p.119), one of the main differences is that:

“...positivists separate themselves from the world they study, while researchers within the other three paradigms acknowledge that they have to participate in real-world life to some extent so as to better understand and express its emergent properties and features.”

Thus, it has been argued that unlike positivism, because the other three approaches allow the researcher to interact with what is being investigated then they are more suited to social science research and in particular to the use of qualitative research (Healy & Perry, 2000; Perry, Riege, & Brown, 1999; Sobh & Perry, 2006).

Below, we will briefly review each the research paradigms, and will conclude (Section 3.3.5) by discussing the paradigm(s) that will be adopted in this research.

3.3.1. Positivism

The positivist’s philosophical paradigm (also termed ‘naïve realism’) comes from natural sciences (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994), and is therefore viewed as being based on scientific or systematic methods (Collis & Hussey, 2009). This paradigm assumes that reality exists which is driven by permanent natural laws and mechanisms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Positivists believe that reality is independent of human beings and is therefore objective — that is, social entities exist in reality that is external to and independent of social actors (such as researchers) (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Reality is context free, and researchers here prioritise observation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The goal is the discovery of theories which are based on empirical research (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Meanwhile, Schensul (2012) further added that the researcher should observe independently and avoid the interaction, which can have an effect on the subject matter when collecting data. Cavana, Delahaye, and Sekaran (2001) and Healy and Perry (2000) suggested that this research paradigm would normally use quantitative methods (e.g. surveys, experiments, and verification of hypotheses, etc.) as the data collection source.

This philosophical approach has some strengths and weaknesses. One of its strength is that it can provide a wide coverage of a range of situations; it is fast and economical. The benefits of being able to use large sample sizes may be considerable and highly informative to policy decisions (Amaratunga et al., 2002). Furthermore, outcomes are not influenced by values and biases, and therefore the findings are ‘rigorous’ and ‘true’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, the methods has also been criticised as being rather inflexible and artificial, not being effective in understanding people’s action; and also as not being helpful in generating the theory (Amaratunga et al., 2002). More so, it is inappropriate in conducting research in social science, which focuses on the real-life experience of participants. Positivists treat their respondents independently and separate themselves from what is being studied (Healy & Perry, 2000). Therefore, we conclude that this paradigm is not suitable for this research study, of which the aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of talent and talent management amongst Thai hotels. The aim, therefore, is to gain an effective understanding of people’s actions through the researcher interacting with the participants.

3.3.2. Interpretivism (Constructivism or Phenomenology)

By contrast, Interpretivism (Constructivism or Phenomenology) believes that social reality is not objective but rather that it is highly subjective. Interpretivists argue that reality is shaped by our perceptions. For example, a manager within an organisation attaches their own individual meaning to their jobs and the way they think that those jobs should be performed (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Saunders et al., 2012). In this paradigm, the researcher interacts with and gains in-depth understanding of the subject-matter being investigated (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The main thrust of the interpretivists’ argument is that reality is not objective but rather is influenced and shaped by the researcher’s experiences. These experiences are gained through, among other things, interacting with the research subjects (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

This research paradigm is in contrast to the positivists thinking who view reality as being independent of human beings and therefore objective. Constructivists’ views on

knowledge production are useful, as they emphasise the close relationship between researcher and the field of research; and they emphasise interaction and understanding as basic tenets of research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). It is suggested that interpretivism may be appropriate in business and management research (e.g. human resource management), where the purpose of the investigation is often to understand organisational issues and human interactions (Brotherton, 2008; Saunders et al., 2012). In these areas of research, interactions and context are important for gaining understanding of the research subject.

3.3.3. Critical Theory

The critical theory paradigm also contradicts the positivist paradigm - positivism. It is aimed at “...*critiquing and transforming social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values*” (Healy & Perry, 2000, p. 119). Generally, the critical theory research paradigm is based on long-term ethnographic and historical studies in the process of organisation. Thus, the paradigm is highly subjective from the historical and social assumption; that is ‘value-dependent’ and ‘not value-free’, which is very different from positivism.

This research does not intend to critically investigate the long-term process of talent identification and talent management within the Thai hospitality industry and neither is it intended to study the history of this phenomenon. Therefore, the critical theory paradigm is inappropriate for this research. Moreover, in this research we aim at understanding the actions of the decision makers involved, rather than changing their approaches. The findings may be used as guidelines for the researcher and practitioners on talent management in the Thai hospitality industry; therefore, this research paradigm is not appropriate to this research.

Interpretivism and critical theory paradigms believe that the ‘world’ (or reality) is constructed by people (and is subjective). Consequently, it has been argued that the findings of these paradigms may not be real in the sense of the real world which ‘exists’. These paradigms are mainly based on the perception of the individuals or organisation

(Sobh & Perry, 2006). Therefore, focusing on these paradigms may not be entirely applicable to this research, which aims to investigate the application of the concept of talent and talent management in the Thai hospitality industry and make sense (judge) how this is influenced by the nature of the industry, culture, beliefs, etc.

3.3.4. Realism

The Realism paradigm has *“emerged recently, and mainly within the context of the debate about the validity of interpretive research methods”* (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The paradigm is generally based on the assumption (ontological assumption) that *“there is a ‘real’ world to discover even though it is only imperfectly apprehensible”* (Healy & Perry, 2000, p. 120). In other words, this paradigm assumes that there are real world objects, which are independent of the investigator (that is, objective reality) (Godfrey & Hill, 1995; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Healy & Perry, 2000; Robson, 2011). Therefore, it can be argued that Realism is the bridge between Positivism and Interpretivism; that is, the world is real but we cannot understand it unless we factor in other variables such as culture, beliefs, etc. In other words, the world exists but the only way we can examine and understand it is through the lenses of culture, beliefs, etc.

This Realism paradigm can be divided into 2 main schools of thought, the critical Realist paradigm and the subtle Realist paradigm. The main difference between these schools of thought is on the role of the researcher in harvesting knowledge. In terms of the role that the investigator plays within this framework, the critical Realists assume that our ability to know this reality is imperfect, and therefore the investigator has to critically investigate the claims about reality in order to fully understand that reality. Meanwhile, the subtle Realists argue that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know. In this case, the investigator and the object are intertwined — that is, *“...who we are and how we understand the world is a central part of how we understand ourselves, others and the world”* (Healy & Perry, 2000).

Furthermore, we note that the Realists employ different research methodologies as a means of reducing researcher bias. Thus, Realists use triangulation (Healy & Perry,

2000; Perry et al., 1999; Sobh & Perry, 2006); that is, the result is mediated from different angle including researcher, objective data, use of different type of methodologies (e.g. interview, observation). By contrast, real Interpretivists only care about perceptions while real Positivists do not care about the perceptions, but only look for the ‘real’ they can see. Thus, the Realist takes both views into consideration.

In conclusion, we note that the complex nature of reality as seen through the realism perspective means that realism research is primarily concerned with building theory rather than the testing of theory in a positivistic sense. This is in contrast, for example, with positivistic research, which is concerned with the testing of a theory and is focused on sampling and statistical determination of the validity of this generalisation. Realism research does not deny the utility of such approaches (Healy & Perry, 2000), but its focus is on the building of theory and its confirmation or disconfirmation of this theory. The validity sought is through analytic generalisation (Yin, 1994) whereby the analytical constructs are examined and compared to other examples extant in the world, rather than through a statistical generalisation to a population.

3.3.5. Conclusion of the Review and Consideration of Research Paradigms

In the above sections, we have given a brief background of each of the research paradigms. While in the previous section, we discussed assumptions about ‘the nature of reality’, ‘knowledge’ and methodology underpinning these paradigms, the question therefore becomes which approach should we adopt for this research and why? There is also need to be aware of the dangers and pitfalls of each of the paradigms. Thus, for example, there needs to be awareness of the “...*tension between interpretivist and positivist approaches in a political debate about the nature, importance and capacity of different research methods*” (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

However, a contradictory view is that there is no need to identify with a single paradigm when undertaking qualitative research. Thus, researchers are urged to take a more practical approach; one that is divorced from the Interpretivists versus Positivists debate (Morgan, 2008). While this observation was made within the context of discussing the

subject from the quantitative versus qualitative research debate, nonetheless we may also apply the same reasoning within the context of this research.

Within the context of this research, knowledge of the differences (or non-differences) between the two qualitative paradigms of Realism and Constructivism is important, since these are the more likely candidates for use within this research. These differences were aptly captured by Stake (2000), when differentiating between intrinsic and instrumental case research. This distinction is explored in detail in Section 3.9 but suffice it to note that Healy and Perry (2000) concluded that (in constructivism/interpretivism):

“...participant's perceptions are being studied for their own sake in constructivism research, but in realism research, these perceptions are being studied because they provide a window on to a reality beyond those perceptions” (Healy and Perry, 2000, p.120).

Given the above observation by Healy & Perry (2000), we conclude that Realism is more suited to this research study. Therefore, Table 3.2 presents the implications of the Realist approach in this research.

Assumption	Realism
Ontological assumptions (<i>the nature of reality which the researcher investigated</i>)	The world exists. That is, the world is real but we cannot understand it unless we understand the context, culture, belief, etc. In which it exists. Our understanding of the world is through those lenses.
Epistemological assumptions (<i>what constitutes valid knowledge — the relationship between the reality and the researcher</i>)	<p>The researcher has to be aware of her own bias; and this is mitigated through triangulation (multiple sources). The multiple sources include the researcher, objective data, different type of methodologies (interview, observation, documentary evidence).</p> <p>According to the Realist paradigm, the world is mediated by beliefs and interpretation, and does not exist separately. That is, the object and subject need to interact through the lenses of culture, belief, etc.</p>
Methodological assumptions (<i>the process of research — technique used by the researcher</i>)	<p>This research relies on a qualitative method including semi-structured interviews, and it is supplemented by observations and documentation. These multi-sources of data triangulate the findings, and helps ensure that the interpretation of data is correct.</p> <p>The research questions were guided by the literature review (conceptual framework). Also, whatever emerged during the data collection fieldwork was noted and recorded. The results are used to conceptualise the new understanding.</p>

Table 3.2: Implication of the Realist approach in this research

The first step in the research process is to formulate the questions for which answers are being sought through the process of discovery (Stake, 2000). With realism based research, the dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative paradigms is replaced by an approach that is considered appropriate given the research topic of interest and level of existing knowledge pertaining to it (Porter, 2007). In other words, it is the objective of the study and the circumstances within which the study is being conducted that give rise to the decision of whether to adopt a qualitative or quantitative approach or to use a methodology such as case study.

This empirical research aims to understand the application of the concept of talent within the hospitality industry in Thailand, and specifically focuses on hotels that are members of the Thailand hotel association (THA). The research also aims to investigate how hotels in Thailand manage talent. Therefore, the study is an attempt to gain an understanding of the reality based on the experiences of the participating hotels

expressed through the views of their representatives. The research is focused on understanding the perceptions of participants about the application of the term talent and how talent can be managed effectively. Based on the ensuing discussion and the criteria of each philosophical approach as set-out in Table 3.1, it can be concluded that the realism research paradigm would be the most appropriate philosophy to adopt for this study compared to the interpretivists' research paradigm. In addition, the research does not intend to test a hypothesis.

3.4. Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Social Research: A Critical Review

In addition to choosing the philosophical research paradigm for the research, another important consideration when undertaking research is to identify an appropriate research approach. There are two main research approaches in social science; and these are deductive and inductive approaches (Anderson, 2009; Brotherton, 2008; Collis & Hussey, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012). Martin, Beaumont, Doig, and Pate (2005) explained that before collecting fieldwork data, the researcher should have reviewed the literature and prepared a research framework or concept, which he or she wants to study. This entails identifying the research approach to adopt.

In the deductive approach, the theory is developed and then tested by empirical observations. Meanwhile, in the inductive approach theory is built from the observations of empirical reality (Anderson, 2009; Brotherton, 2008; Collis & Hussey, 2009; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The main focus in the inductive approach is on collecting data from the real world and then uses this data as a resource for developing explanations or theories. Meanwhile, the main focus in the deductive approach is testing existing theories rather than developing, and this is based on the positivists' philosophy (Brotherton, 2008). Table 3.3 below illustrates the comparisons between deductive and inductive approaches.

Inductive	Deductive
Investigates meaning and perception	Works within scientific principles
Takes context of data into account	Identifies variables and establishes clear definition of variables
Allows for incremental development of the research process	Adopts a structured and replicable approach
Collects qualitative data	Collect quantitative data
Accepts researcher involvement in the process being investigated	Maintains independence of the subjects being researched
Accepts the value of deep ‘rich’ data that is less generalisable	Uses large enough sample to be able to generalise conclusion

Table 3.3: Research Approaches (Inductive and Deductive)

(*Source*: Anderson, 2009, p. 146)

Although both the deductive and inductive research approaches are different (see Table 3.3); however, the use of a purely inductive or deductive approach is rare (and even impossible) (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). We believe that a single model (approach) may not be suitable in talent management research. For example, “a strict form of deductive approach” may not be suitable for investigating the issue in talent management; while ‘pure induction’ may be impossible in studying the issue because most emerging issues start from the existing knowledge (theory) (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Therefore, some researchers believe that the combination of both approaches helps to achieve a better research strategy (Brotherton, 2008; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Saunders et al., 2012). Similarly, Saunders et al. (2012) advocated the use of a combined approach. In the abduction approach (mixed-approaches), the data is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and explain patterns to generate a new

theory or to modify an existing theory. This may be subsequently tested, often through additional data collection.

Deductive	Relation	Inductive	Relation	Implementation
Scientific principle	No	Gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events	Yes	Understanding of the application of term talent in the hospitality Industry
Moving from theory to data	Yes	Moving from data to theory	Yes	Method of data collection and analysis
Need to explain casual relationships between variables	No	Close understanding of research context	Yes	Understand the industry closely and build a close relation with participants during the data collection
Collect the quantitative data	No	Collect qualitative data	Yes	Data collection method are: semi-structured interviews, observations and documentation
Quantitative data analysis — analyse from the theme /from the theoretical framework	Yes	Qualitative data analysis — the emerging finding from the fieldwork	Yes	The data analysis used the theoretical framework as a guide, but rely more heavily on the occurrences during the fieldwork
The researcher can control the validity of data	No	The researcher cannot control the phenomenon	Yes	This research is based on the natural setting, thus it is opened for the interviewees to answer; the availability the document; and the environment in the organisation
Researcher is independent of what is being researched	No	Researcher is part of the research process	Yes	Interpretation of data
The finding can be generalised to other context	May be	Less concern with the need to generalisation	Yes	It is specific in the context of hospitality industry in Thailand

Table 3.4: Implication of the research approaches in this research

(Source: Adapted from Saunders et al. 2012, p. 146)

Based on the literature review in Chapter 2, this thesis will consider using the combination approach (deductive and inductive) as the best fit for conducting the research into how the participants define and manage talent. The implications of the research approach are presented in Table 3.4. Saunders et al. (2012) argue that the use of

the combination approach is better for directing and focusing the analysis. In our case, the deductive approach is implied. That is, through the literature review we gathered information that the concept of talent and talent management exists in the world (though mediated by factors such as Thai background, the economic situation, the nature of the hospitality industry, etc.); and from that deduced questions and interpretations. In other words, the deductive approach is used during the stage of formulating the theoretical framework, and identifying themes from the literature. After that, we consider the inductive approach that is we go into the real world (into the field) in order to look for the evidence through empirical research, which aims to investigate the application of the concept of talent and management of talent in the hospitality industry. Based on the evidence, we can induce a new theory of the application of talent and management of talent in the Thai hospitality industry. The evidence is interpreted from the objective evidence (the existing theory) and subjective evidence (the perceptions of participants); and this takes into consideration other evidence or supporting information such as observations and documentation.

The quantitative method is mainly used for research which falls under the umbrella of positivism philosophical paradigm, while the qualitative approach is used in a research which follows the other three paradigms including interpretivism and realism (Amaratunga et al., 2002; Creswell, 2014). While the interpretative philosophy uses a qualitative approach to inductively and holistically understand human experience in context-specific settings and understand the phenomenon; the positivism philosophy uses quantitative approach to test hypothetical deductive generations and need to be independent of the subject of research (Amaratunga et al., 2002). The following sections will compare and contrast the qualitative and quantitative approaches. In particular, the sections will focus on the advantages and disadvantages of each approach, and consider situations when each is used. The section will also discuss the reasons for adopting the qualitative approach in this thesis.

3.4.1. Qualitative Research Approach

The qualitative approach normally leads to a sustained interaction between researchers and participants (Creswell, 2014). It is a ‘*multi-method*’ approach, involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the subject matter. This means that:

“...qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.... seek to make sense of personal stories and the way in which they interact” (Thomas, 2003, pp. 1-2).

This approach can be achieved, for example by using interviews, observations, films or documentation analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Cooper & Schindler, 1998; Saunders et al., 2012). The method acts as an instrument for collecting data, and the results are based on the researcher’s interpretation (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Patton, 2002; Saunders et al., 2012). Researchers who adopt this method can experience both advantages and disadvantages as will be discussed below.

One of the advantages of the qualitative research approach is that it focuses on naturally occurring events; and as a result qualitative research tends to illustrate what real life is like — this is in contrast to quantitative research which aims to analyse data statistically (Amaratunga et al., 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Another advantage of qualitative research is that researchers can get a better understanding of the participants to the research. Instead of just answering ‘what’, ‘how much’, ‘how many’ questions; qualitative research rather focuses on answering questions about ‘how’ and ‘why’ things happened (Saunders et al., 2012). This leads to a more in-depth understanding of the research issues (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Moreover, it offers the researcher an opportunity to investigate information in a holistic and rich way; and thus lead to a rich understanding of the context (Amaratunga et al., 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Furthermore, it allows for flexibility in data collection, data analysis and data interpretation (Cassell & Symon, 1994; Creswell, 2014; Hoepfl, 1997).

However, there are some limitations in conducting qualitative research. For example interpretation of the findings may create bias since interpretation is dependent on the

researcher's characteristics and personal experiences (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, proponents of the quantitative approach argue that this approach can lead to a lack of consistency and reliability (Myers & Avison, 1997) and results from qualitative research have limited generalisations.

3.4.2. Quantitative Research Approach

In contrast to the qualitative research approach, the quantitative research approach generally falls under the philosophical paradigm of positivism (Amaratunga et al., 2002; Collis & Hussey, 2009; Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Saunders et al., 2012). The quantitative research approach originates from the natural sciences, and normally aims to study natural phenomena. Techniques for collecting data include surveys, experiments and mathematical modelling (Maxwell, 2012; Saunders et al., 2012). Quantitative methods generally attempt to test whether a theory is true by measuring and explaining results scientifically (Creswell, 2014). Not surprisingly, it is more focused on numbers rather than words (unlike qualitative research) (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Maxwell, 2012). This method attempts to answer '*how much?*' or '*how many?*' type questions (Maxwell, 2012; Yin, 2009).

A quantitative research approach allows the researcher to focus on a specific problem (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). Moreover, findings based on this approach have high validity and reliability since it uses statistical measurements to validate and test results for reliability (Creswell, 2014). The high validity and reliability is also due to the large sample size, and the results viewed as generalisable to other similar studies (Saunders et al., 2012, Yin, 2009).

Despite the benefits of using the quantitative method, drawbacks also exist. Thus for example, it leads to limited answers due to the over-reliance on using closed questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, it does not allow the researcher to be close to what is being researched, and any emerging information during the process of conducting research cannot be supported in the study (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

3.4.3. Summary of the Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Approaches

Table 3.5, below, is a summary of the comparison between the qualitative and quantitative methods. Regarding the illustration of the comparison of the implication to the research methods in Table 3.5 it is in line with the research aim and objectives. This research will employ the qualitative approach to investigate the application of the term talent and the management of talent among the participating hotels.

Criteria	Qualitative Method	Relevance	Quantitative Method	Relevance	Implication
Philosophical Paradigm	Interpretivism and realism	Yes	Positivism	No	Researcher close to what is being investigated and interprets the meaning using own knowledge and experience
Research Approach	Inductive	Yes	Deductive	Yes	Data collection method: -Inductive: interviews, observations -Deductive: use the interview guide from literature review
Purpose	To explore what happens in real life and develop a theory	Yes	To test the theory (confirm/reject the theory)	Yes	This research aims to gain the in-depth understanding of how the term talent is used in the hotel industry and how it is managed.
Research question	How, why — focus on word and explanation	Yes	What, how much, how many, how often—focus on the number	No	To answer the question how the talent and talent management applies in hospitality industry
Data collection technique	Observations, interviews, focus groups, documentation	Yes	Surveys, experiments, and mathematical modelling	No	Using semi-structured interviews; supplemented by observation and documentation
Quality of data	The data is rich and deep of information but bias is arise as it is depend on the researcher interpretation	Yes	High validity and reliability since it uses scientific measurement but very limited information	No	It is rich and in-depth information form data triangulation
Result	Results have limited generalisation to other research in a different context — the result from small number of participants	Yes	Results can be generalised to other research; since they are derived from a good representative sample (large sample)	May be	This research only collect from 38 participants and the finding may just apply to this group of participants. Caution must be exercised when generalising the findings.

Table 3.5: Summary Comparison of the Nature of Qualitative and Quantitative Method

(Source: Adopted from (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Healy & Perry, 2000; Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Saunders et al., 2012; Sobh & Perry, 2006; Yin, 2009)

The researcher will attempt to gain an in-depth understanding through the opinions of interviewees, examination of documentation and observations. Ghauri, Gronhaug, and Kristianslund (1995, p. 86), argued that “...*qualitative research is (an) appropriate research when the objectives is to gain an in-depth insight into a phenomenon.*” This understanding helps the researcher to develop the concept of the application of term talent and how talent is managed among participating hotels. The research will also explore why talent is defined and managed that way? Maxwell (2012), noted that quantitative research aims to answer questions such as who, where, how many, how much, and what is the relationship between specific variables.

In contrast, a qualitative research attempts to answer questions such as why and how. Furthermore, this researcher used interviews, documentations, and observations, which will allow the researcher to gain a rich and in-depth understanding of the data. This is discussed in more detail in section 3.8.2 on data collection method. Another reason is that the researcher attempted to investigate and understand the definition of talent, which is being used, and the way talent are managed through the spoken words in the conversations with the interviewees, in the documents and from observations, rather than to measure or quantify the information.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the researcher concluded that the qualitative method is a more suitable method for conducting this research and investigating the research aim.

3.5. The Value of the Case Study as a Research Strategy: A Critical Review

The research strategy is a plan of how the researcher will go about answering the research question; and according to Saunders et al. (2012) this should be directly linked to the data collection method. This research relied on qualitative research approach design (as discussed in the Section 3.4), which is aligned to the realism paradigm (Healy & Perry, 2000; Perry et al., 1999; Robson, 2011; Sobh & Perry, 2006).

According to Saunders et al. (2012) there are eight types of research strategies, namely; experiment, survey, archival analysis, action research, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, and case study. Different research strategies are suited to certain research approaches, and are therefore mainly used within certain settings. According to Yin (2009), the choice of research strategy is based on the type of research questions that are posed; the extent of control that an investigator has over actual behavioural events; and the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical event. Table 3.6 presents a list of research strategies and the possible research questions that might be answered under each strategic choice. Thus, for example, the qualitative research is more suited to grounded theory and case studies; while the quantitative approach is applicable to experiment and survey (Creswell, 2014).

Strategy	Research Questions	Required of Control of Behaviour Events?	Focused on Contemporary Events	Implement to this Research
Experiment	How, why?	Yes	Yes	No
Survey	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes	No
Archival analysis	Who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes/no	No
History	How, why?	No	No	No
Case study	How, why?	No	Yes	Yes

Table 3.6: Choice of research strategy

(Source: Adapted from Yin, 2008, p.8)

Case studies are used to explore/investigate a research topic or phenomenon within its context; or to explore/investigate a contemporary problem within a number of real-life contexts (Saunders et al., 2012; Scholz & Tietje, 2012; Yin, 2009). This is more-so when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Case studies are more relevant if the researcher is aiming to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research (Saunders et al 2012). It should be considered mainly when the

researcher is aiming to answer ‘how’, ‘why’ (Yin, 2009), and ‘what’ questions (Saunders et al, 2012).

In stressing the differences between constructivism and realism, Healy and Perry (2000, p. 120) drew attention to ‘intrinsic’ and ‘instrumental’ case research. They argued that in an intrinsic case study, the case itself is the focus, while in an instrumental case study; the case is being used to understand something else. These concepts are shaped by the philosophical approach that is adopted. Thus, for example, the intrinsic case research is usually associated with Interpretivism, while the instrumental case study is associated as with Realism. The instrumental case study world is made of “*abstract things that are born of people's minds but exist independently of any one person*” (Magee, 1985, p. 61, as cited in Healy and Perry, 2000, p. 120).

This research aims to critically investigate how the term talent is being defined and identified within the context of hotels in the hospitality industry in Thailand especially in view of the introduction of the AEC; more so how the hotels manage talent (those that are labelled as talent). The aim is to gain in-depth understanding of the concept of talent (phenomenon) within the context of the hospitality industry and in particular within the context of Thai hotels during the introductory of AEC (the condition of transitioning to freer labour market under the new scheme of AEC). This will allow the researcher to understand the phenomena of defining, identifying and managing talent within the context of the hospitality industry. In relation to the overall research aim and objectives, the case study will be utilised.

Yin (2009) proposed four types of case studies; the single case study (type 1 and type 2) — studying a case in its totality (holistic) and studying unit/units, process/processes, or project/projects. That is the same single-case may involve more than one unit (single-case embedded) of analysis. However, the finding of single case study both type 1 and 2 are interpreted holistically. Multiple case studies (type three and type four) in contrast are aimed at studying and comparing cases in their totality (holistic). That is, it studies various units within identifiable cases (embedded). These are presented in Table 3.7 below.

	Single case design	Multiple case design
Single unit of analyse	Single-case (holistic) design — type 1	Multiple-case (holistic) design— type 3
Embedded case	Single-case (embedded) design — type 2	Multiple-case (embedded) — type 4

Table 3.7: Types of case studies

(*Source:* Adapted from Yin, 2009, p. 46)

According to Yin (2009) multiple cases (more than one case) offer better opportunities for generalisation, and this is due to the fact that there is more evidence from more than one case. Thus, the results of multiple cases are more robust than single case (Voss, Tsikriktsis, & Frohlich, 2002; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) also argued that the single case is only applicable in the following circumstances: critical case; extreme/unique case; representative/typical case; revelatory case; and longitudinal case (see Table 3.8). This research is only focused on hotels in Thailand. In a single unit case study the aim to increase theoretical replication; while in the multiple case study the aim is more on generalisation of results (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009).

Rational	Characteristic	Implement in this research
Critical case	Testing the well-formulate theory	No
Extreme case/ unique case	Rare case, common occur in the clinical psychology	No
Representative/ typical case	It captures the circumstances and condition of everyday/common place situation	Yes
Revelatory case	Exist when an investigator has the opportunity to access the phenomenon which no previously accessible	No
Longitudinal case	Study 2 or more different point in time to see how certain conditions change over time.	No

Table 3.8: Rationale of Single Case

(*Source*: Adapted from Yin, 2009, pp. 47-50)

For the reasons discussed above, this thesis adopted the embedded single case study as the most appropriate type of case study. The embedded single case study was chosen because it will represent the phenomenon of the hospitality industry in Thailand, within the context of the AEC. Yin (2009) recommended that this type of case study should be used when investigating a typical case within the same industry, school, or village. The single case study investigated the definition, identification and management of talent among hotels that are members of the Thai Hotel Association (THA). The 29 sub units (hotels) of this single case are the hotels classified according to ownership and the classification is as follows: Thai-branded (individual and chain management) and International branded (chain management) hotels. Furthermore, the different level of management — CEO/general manager/ owner; human resource department managers; and line managers are considered as sub unit in each hotel.

It is widely believed that case studies are useful in the study of human affairs because they are down-to-earth and attention-holding. However, it is also acknowledged that they are not a suitable basis for generalisation. Case studies will often be the preferred

method of research because they may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience and thus to that person a natural basis for generalisation.

This current research is interested in general or population phenomenon (that is, generalisation) rather than the individual cases per se. However, we cannot understand about the general phenomenon without knowing about other cases (Stake, 2000). Resource constraints mean that we can concentrate on limited cases in order to understand the general complexities. While, we may simultaneously investigate more than one case study, each of the case studies essentially merge into a single case. Furthermore, in this research we will not study comparison cases.

3.6. The Research Structure and Process: An Overview

This research can be divided into stages using a selection of methodological approaches linked to the research objectives as follows:

Stage One: Secondary Data Collection Methods as follows:

Literature Review, Data Mining and Content Analysis.

Stage Two: Primary Data Collection Methods as follows:

Semi-structured Interviews, Observation and Examination of Documents linked to:

Objective one: To critically investigate and determine how the concept of talent applies in the hospitality industry;

Objective two: To evaluate critically how participating hotels manage talents;

Objective three: To conceptualise the application of the concept of talent used among hotels, and how talent is managed.

3.7. Stage One: The Literature Review and Secondary Data Collection Process

The process of conducting the literature review involved searching for relevant literature in a variety of locations. The primary location for literature was the online databases of academic research. A variety of keywords were used to ensure the maximum numbers of relevant articles are found. Collecting and critically reviewing information from a diverse source of documents and electronically stored information, is similar to ‘data mining’ (Meenakshi, Berry, & Linoff, 2000); adapted here, on a much smaller scale, to the task of a critical literature review.

The critical review of literature allowed written documents from various sources to be systematically analysed in order to identify and determine specific inferences and linkages. It was a process applying both inductive and deductive strategies with the aim of identifying specific themes to develop the conceptual framework and model for the development of the research questions and research aim and specific objectives. Each piece of literature was critically reviewed against the aim and specific objectives to appreciate how theories and practices can be replicated and subsequently, how the results of this study of how talent is defined and managed in the hotel sector in Thailand contributes to the knowledge in the academic area of talent management.

The method of analysis of the documents could not be described as content analysis or the quantitative analysis of what is in the document. It is neither discourse analysis which prioritises language i.e. ‘how things are said’ above content of ‘what is said’ (Robson, 2011). Rather, a ‘conventional’ analysis was undertaken of the content of the documents in order to build a picture of knowledge to date and identify themes, geographical location, strengths, weaknesses and gaps.

In reviewing the literature, the author used different data sources. Some of the data sources included academic journals, books, government websites (e.g. Bank of Thailand), etc. which contained key topic and/or issues related talent and talent management around the world and in the Thai hospitality industry. This also included the subject of AEC — its importance, advantages and disadvantages.

The author initially used the University of Salford database and the google scholar to search for ‘talent’ and ‘talent management’; and she hit quite a high volume of material. This trove was narrowed down by applying further criteria such as ‘talent & hospitality industry’; ‘talent management & hospitality industry’; ‘talent management & Thailand’. The data mining needs to consider the geographical and cultural differences to avoid the bias (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006). Therefore, these were considered while choosing the data sources.

The critical review of the literature identified gaps related to the concept of talent and talent management, which are detailed in section 3.8. The primary data will be used to gain more in-depth understanding and answer questions arising from the literature review.

3.8. Stage Two: Empirical Research, Primary Data Collection Process

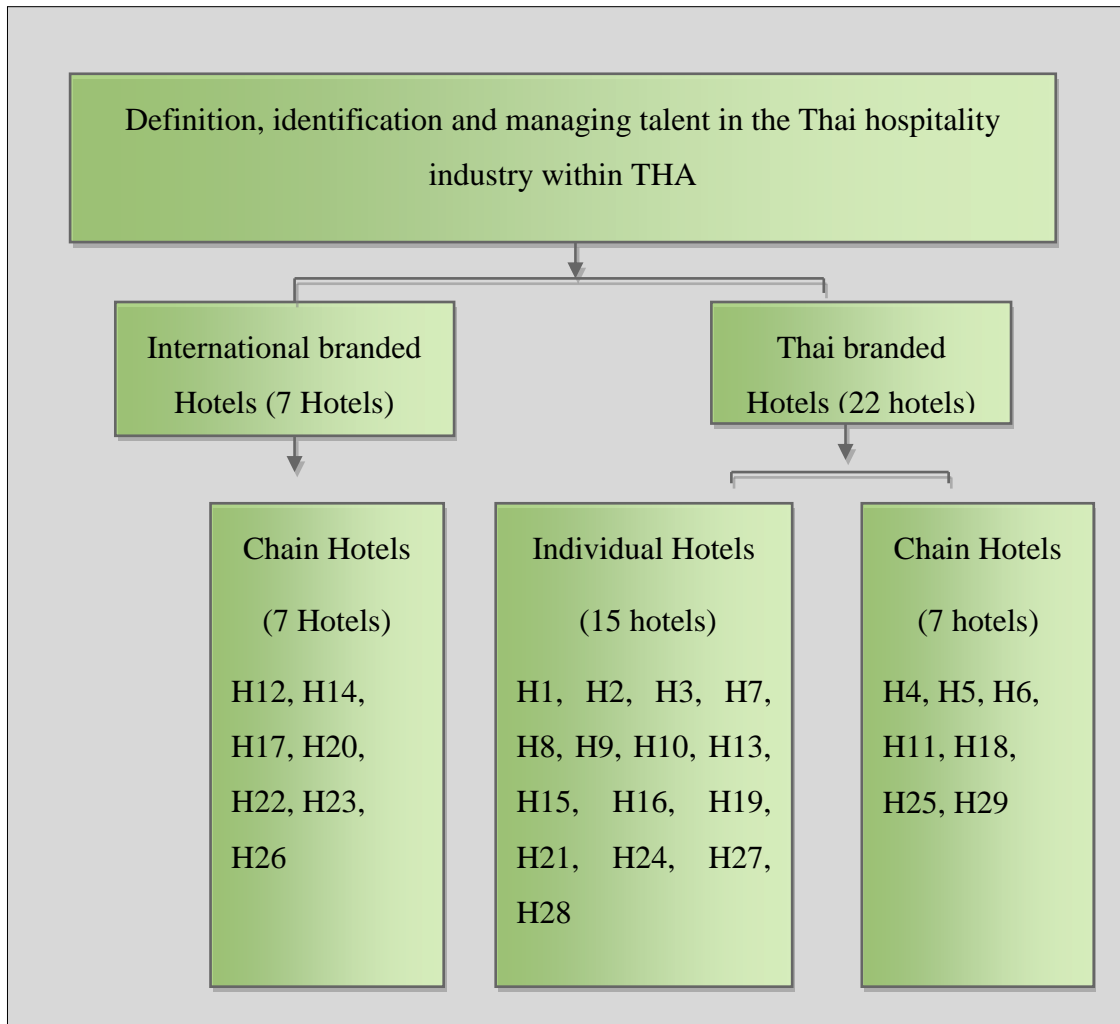
The purpose of Stage Two was to recruit key individuals involved in the management of talent in the hotel sector of the leisure industry in Thailand and to undertake qualitative interviews, observation and examination of documents generating data about how talent is defined, identified, managed and any challenges and opportunities. The following sections on the research process present the choices in case selection approach, of the empirical data collection using triangulation of methods (semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis), the pilot study ethical issues, and data quality issues.

3.8.1. Sample Case Selection

This research is carried-out within the context of the hospitality industry, and specifically focuses on hotels falling within the THA umbrella in Thailand. The case is a single case study (embedded units) as mentioned in Section 3.5 (research strategy); in which there 29 are Thai and International branded hotels. The 29 hotels were chosen as the representative of the hotels in Thailand as stated by Miles and Huberman (1984) that

the representative represents the larger population (all hotel in Thailand). That is this research conducted the semi-structured interviews, observations, and analysis of documentation from representative hotels in Thailand in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the application of the term talent and talent management practice in the Thai hospitality industry. Information about the participating hotels (29 units) in this research in terms of number of employees and ownership of the hotels are illustrated in Table 3.9 and Figure 3.2.

Hotel Names/Coding	Hotel Management	Number of Employees
H1	Thai Individual	264
H2	Thai Individual	175
H3	Thai Individual	265
H4	Thai Chain	335
H5	Thai Chain	278
H6	Thai Chain	175
H7	Thai Individual	370
H8	Thai Individual	165
H9	Thai Individual	180
H10	Thai Individual	305
H11	Thai Chain	320
H12	International Chain	225
H13	Thai Individual	270
H14	International Chain	402
H15	Thai Individual	276
H16	Thai Individual	255
H17	International Chain	296
H18	Thai Chain	306
H19	Thai Individual	295
H20	International Chain	390
H21	Thai Individual	170
H22	International Chain	438
H23	International Chain	445
H24	Thai Individual	331
H25	Thai Chain	227
H26	International Chain	235
H27	Thai Individual	170
H28	Thai Individual	278
H29	Thai Chain	360

Table 3.9: Participating Hotels**Figure 3.2: Embedded Single Case Implemented for This Research**

The sample was selected from the 167 hotels that are members of the Thai Hotel Association (see Appendix 8 and further discussion in section 3.8.2.1.1). The Thai Hotel Association (THA) is the only recognised organisation in Thailand which awards star-rating to hotels. Moreover, the participating hotels were selected based on the purposive and snowball sampling techniques (further discussion on Section 3.8.2.1.1) which differ from the positivist approach where the representative (sampling) are taken place as the equal chance of being included, or that the case is representative of the population. Therefore, the participating hotels were selected based on the real purpose and

objectives of the researcher in discovering, gaining insight and understanding a particular phenomenon from the real life context of the Thai hospitality industry during the transitioning (introduction) of the AEC.

3.8.2. Data Collection Method

Given the research aim and objectives and philosophical stance of this research, a qualitative research approach is regarded as the most appropriate approach. The data collection should be aligned accordingly, and therefore the case study strategy is utilised to achieve the research aim and objectives. Accordingly, Saunders et al., (2012); Silverman (2011); Yin (2009) contend that, in qualitative research, and especially in case study, it is better to combine different sources of data and employ multiple data collection methods if possible. Furthermore, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 19) noted that using *“multi-methodological approaches, enhances more detailed and accurate analyses when looking for causalities”* or data triangulation (Healy & Perry, 2000; Sobh & Perry, 2006).

Source of Evidence	Strengths	Weakness
Documentation	Stable: can be reviewed repeatedly Unobtrusive: not created as a result of the case study. Exact: contain exact names, references and details.	Retrievability: can be low Biased selectivity, if collection is incomplete Reporting bias: reflecting the bias of the author Access: may be deliberately blocked
Archival records	Same as above Precise and quantitative	Same as above Accessibility may be limited for privacy reasons
Interviews	Targeted: focuses directly on case studies. Insightful: provides perceived causal inferences	Bias due to poorly constructed questions Response bias Inaccuracies: interviewees say what they think interviewer wants to hear
Direct observation	Reality: covers events in real time Contextual: cover context of event	Time-consuming Selectivity: poor, unless broad coverage Reflexivity: events may be processed differently
Participation/direct observation	Same as direct observation Insightful into interpersonal behaviour and motives	Same as direct observation Bias due to investigator's manipulation of events
Physical artefacts	Insightful into cultural features Insightful into technical operations	Selectivity Availability

Table 3.10: Strengths and Weaknesses of Six Sources of Evidence

(Source: Yin; 2009, p. 102)

There are a range of data collection methods in qualitative research (case study), and these include for example interviews, documentation, archival records, direct observations, participant observations and physical artefacts (Cooper & Schindler, 1998; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Pope & Mays, 2006; Saunders et al., 2012; Yin, 2009). Yin (2009, p. 102) discusses the strengths and weaknesses of each source of evidence, and these are summarised in Table 3.10 above.

Based on the strength and weaknesses of each data collection method and the research objectives, the researcher used semi-structured interviews as the main data collection technique for the qualitative research. Observations and documentation were also used to

collect supplementary data, so as to increase the validity and accuracy of the research by data triangulation (Robson, 2011; Yin, 2009). Bowen (2009, p. 28) concluded that “*the researcher is expected to draw upon multiple (at least two) sources of evidence; that is, to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods.*” The researcher used the qualitative data to get in-depth answers and views about how the concept talent management is applied within the hospitality industry in Thailand. Therefore, this research employed semi-structured interviews and corroborated this information by observation and documentation (see Table 3.11).

Research Objectives	Data Collection Techniques Used in the Empirical Research Stage		
	Interview	Documentation	Observation
To critically investigates how the concept of talent applies in the hospitality industry	Yes	Yes	Yes
To critically evaluate how the participating hotels manage talents.	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 3.11: Data Collection Methods in the Empirical Research Stage

The data sources (semi-structured interviews, documentation and observations) are discussed further below.

3.8.2.1. The Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are some of the most widely used data collection methods in qualitative research. Easterby-Smith et al. (2014) argue that interviews are the best method for gaining information (both verbal and non-verbal e.g. facial expressions, voices). This is because the researcher can gain an understanding of phenomenon based on the formulation of initial research ideas and also based on the interviewees’ own perspective. Moreover, “*the interviewer can ask new questions that follow up*

interviewees' replies and can vary the order of questions and even wording of questions which can emerge the significant issue" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2014, pp. 466-467).

Interviews can be divided into structured, semi-structured or un-structured interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2012). Structured interviews are based on a formal pre-determined or identical set of questions (Robson, 2011). Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews are sometimes referred to as qualitative research interviews. This is because under semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a list of themes and key questions to be covered (an interview guide). However, it is not necessary to ask all the questions to every interviewee. The researcher can add or delete the questions depending on the situation. The interviewees also have the leeway to answer and give their opinions. By contrast, unstructured interviews are informal and have no pre-determined list of questions. Unstructured interviews give opportunities to the interviewee to share his/her beliefs and experiences freely.

To fully explore all the issues that are addressed during research, unstructured and semi-structured interviews are deemed more suited to qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, the disadvantage with unstructured interviews is that only a "*small number of the interviews can take place because it is time consuming and expensive, also the sample size is small the results are unlikely to be representative of particular population*" (Langley, 1987, p. 24). Therefore, semi-structured interview is rather suitable than unstructured interview because it allows the researcher to use the guide from the literature review (interview guide) and at the same time can gain the in-depth-understanding of phenomenon from the free answer of the interviewee. While the unstructured interview is argued to give more sense of the interviewee's understanding of a situation from the open-ended question, it is time consuming and expensive. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were chosen in this research. These allow the researcher to get closer to the interviewee, which can help them imply or interpret the additional information coming from, for example, the body language, comfort or discomfort, stress, etc. The interviewer treats the interview answers as open-ended responses which are describing some external reality. Part of the challenge would thus be to ensure the accuracy of interpretation (Silverman, 2011, p. 225). The interviewer was guided by an

interview guide (that is, a list of interview topics listed in Section 3.8.2.1.2), and this covered the research aim and objectives (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Cooper & Schindler, 1998; Saunders et al., 2012). The list of interview questions listed in Section 3.8.2.1.2 below helped the researcher to focus on what was being researched.

Each of the interviews lasted for approximately 1.5 hours; and in total 38 participants took part representing 29 hotels. The participants were human resource managers, line managers, CEO or department managers; and participation was on a fully voluntary basis. Most of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to answer the research questions as set out in Section 3.8.2.1.2.

3.8.2.1.1. Sampling and Selection of Interviewees

The researcher used the strategic sampling technique as a guide to selecting the subset of individuals for interviewing from the population. Creswell (2014) suggests that there are two main sampling strategies — probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

In probability sampling, it is:

“...always possible to state the probability of each individual respondent being selected for inclusion in the research study, and this is based on the statistical theory. It allows the researcher to quantify uncertainties” (Creswell, 2014, pp. 227-228).

Examples of probability sampling include simple random sampling, cluster sampling, systematic random sampling and stratified random sampling.

In contrast, with non-probability sampling it is *“not possible to state the probability of any member of the population being sampled”* (Creswell, 2014, p. 228). Different types of non-probability sampling techniques are discussed below, as expounded by Creswell (2014, pp. 228-229).

- **Convenience sampling** is a selected sample based on the researcher convenience. It is not probability sampling, and there is no guarantee that the sample will be representative of the population.
- **Quota sampling** usually involves dividing the population into categories and then selecting samples continuously of the size of each category. The respondents are chosen in proportion (e.g. the study of male and female smoking), the researcher have to choose 50 per cent males and 50 per cent females. This technique is close to the probability sampling but not all the population has an equal chance of being chosen (Brotherton, 2008).
- **Purposive sampling:** In this technique, the researcher has a clear idea of what sample units are needed, and then approaches potential sample members to check whether they meet eligibility criteria. The respondents are chosen, for example, based on the purpose of key positions the respondents hold. Moreover, they may be chosen by the particular type of operation, destination or event because they are the key of characteristics (Brotherton, 2008).
- **Snowballing sampling** starts with someone who meets the criteria for the study, who is then asked to recommend others. This technique works well with individuals; groups or companies that are part of networks whose membership is confidential.

Since the selection of participants to a qualitative research study is mainly based on interviews, therefore probability sampling is almost never used. Non-probability sampling is therefore “*more often applied in qualitative research*” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 441). Since this research employed qualitative research method, the participants to the research were chosen using a non-probability sampling technique.

This research used purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Berg and Lune (2012) claimed that in these sampling techniques, there is no way of estimating the probability of being included; and thus there is no guarantee that every element has had an equal chance of being included, or that the case is representative of the population. Interviewees are selected based on the real purpose and objectives of the researcher in discovering, gaining insight and understanding a particular phenomenon.

Regarding the purposive sampling technique, this was initially employed in order to access the target hotels. The emails were sent out to all the hotels, however only 4 of the hotels accepted and were willing to participate to this study. Despite the initial email invitation phase not being very successful, the researcher used this as an opportunity to ask the initial participating hotels to recommend other people who met the eligibility criteria (snowballing technique). The snowballing technique was a success and allowed the researcher to get in contact with more hotels. As a result, more and more participants took part until the saturation point of 29 hotels was reached. The main reason why snowballing technique was a success within the Thailand context was that the Thai culture is based on the 'collective society'. The relation among family and community play a very important role. Therefore, close relation is very important in order to get access and gain the trust of participants; and the researcher used these relationships to gain access to participants.

McCracken and McCracken (1988); and Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) contend that there are no set guidelines on what constitutes an adequate sample size in qualitative research. The sample size is more a function of the purpose of the research (Patton, 2002). Meanwhile, Kvale (1996) suggested that the researcher has to question as many subjects or interviewees until he/she reaches saturation point, and this implies that the researcher has to conduct interviews as many times as necessary to meet his/her needs. Similarly, Taylor and Bogdan (1984) argued that the sample size in qualitative research is more a consideration about the quality of the interview responses rather than the number of interviews.

In this research study, 38 interviews were conducted with key actors (such as CEOs/general managers, line managers and HR professionals) representing the 29 hotels who took part in the research. Table 3.12 below presents a summary of the information about the participants to the research. The participating hotels were members of the THA. Dealing with members of the THA enabled the researcher to better understand the contextual setting of the organisation, as the THA is the main accreditation association of hotels in Thailand.

Position	Code	Age	Gender	Experiences/Years	Hotel
General Managers, Owners, Residence manager, and Executives Chief	GM1	37	Male	12	H1
	GM2	52	Male	25	H2
	GM3	56	Male	40	H3
	GM4	55	Male	25	H4
	GM5	55	Male	30	H5
	GM6	32	Female	5	H6
	GM7	45	Female	15	H7
	GM8	55	Male	20	H8
Human Resource Directors, Human Resource Managers, Assistant HR managers	HRM1	42	Female	10	H9
	HRM2	37	Female	6	H10
	HRM3	45	Male	16	H11
	HRM4	34	Female	7	H12
	HRM5	42	Female	12	H13
	HRM6	39	Female	10	H14
	HRM7	48	Male	20	H15
	HRM8	42	Male	15	H16
	HRM9	43	Male	10	H17
	HRM10	38	Male	10	H18
	HRM11	39	Male	13	H19
	HRM12	37	Female	10	H20
	HRM13	36	Male	10	H21
	HRM14	38	Male	7	H22
	HRM15	45	Male	10	H23
	HRM16	42	Female	10	H24
	HRM17	42	Male	5	H25
	HRM18	49	Male	9	H26
Line Managers (Front office managers, Housekeeping managers, Food and beverage manager)	LM1	38	Female	14	H27
	LM2	42	Male	15	H28
	LM3	45	Female	18	H29
	LM4	38	Female	10	H6
	LM5	42	Female	15	H6
	LM6	37	Male	8	H25
	LM7	37	Male	12	H20
	LM8	35	Female	10	H20
	LM9	45	Male	17	H20
	LM10	39	Male	10	LM19
	LM11	35	Female	6	LM26
	LM12	42	Female	15	H14

Table 3.12: List of Interviewees

The key HR actors in this research were chosen because they hold strategic positions in the organisations, and therefore are involved in strategic decision making including the

recruitment of talent within the organisation. Macneil (2001) asserted that these positions have a higher understanding of the organisation's strategic objectives and thus provide a greater line of insight. Furthermore, those individual's experiences are unique to that individual and is comprised of all the experiences he or she has encountered and how that person has thought about, reacted to and learnt from those experiences (Brotherton, 2008). Tansley et al. (2007) observed that this position plays an important role in identifying, motivating and retaining talented workers. Furthermore, the management of talent cannot be achieved through the HR departments working alone, but also through the whole management structure (e.g. CEOs/general managers, line managers and HR professionals) playing a key role. The key to effectively managing talent is that the management team at all levels (McCauley & Wakefield, 2006; Stahl et al., 2012) should manage the strategic management. The research will focus on line managers of departments; that is, it will only concentrate on line managers of departments that have a direct impact on customers (e.g. front office, food and beverage and housekeeping departments) (Grobler & Diedericks, 2009; Kaewsaeng-on, 2011).

Hotels within the THA are classified into star-rating; with star-rating from one to five-stars. There were 231 hotels (as at 2014) (Data source: THA (2012) <http://thaihotels.org/name-list-for-hotel-resort-2012/>) that are members THA — 68 five-star hotels, 99 four-star hotels, 55 three-star hotels, and 9 two-star hotels (see Appendix 8, page). The THA is the only recognised organisation in Thailand which awards star-rating to hotels. In order to gain rigorous and robust data, the sample units for the research will be hotels that are classified as four and five stars (see Appendix 8); and which also had a large number of rooms as Langputeh (2013) suggest there are three categories of hotels — small (1-30 rooms), medium (31-100 rooms), large (101 rooms and over). Hotels with a four and five star-rating and a large number of rooms were chosen. This decision was made in line with the conclusions of a study by Price (1994) who concluded that good HR practices are found among relatively large employers and better performing companies because they consistently review and improve their management policy.

Based on the three criteria; strategic HR actors, four and five stars-rated hotels, and large hotels, the sample size was determined. There were 38 volunteers who accepted to take part in the interview; and these came from 29 large organisations (four and five star-rated hotels). The selected hotels almost covered the whole geographical regions (Central and Capital, East, South) of Thailand. No data were collected in Northern region since no names were recommended from other interviewees through the snowballing sampling technique. Furthermore, the data collected from the other regions were similar, and therefore the researcher had reached the information saturated point.

The interviews were conducted over a period of 2 months. While most of the interviews were conducted on hotel sites, the participants were however free to choose any other place and/or time of their own convenience.

3.8.2.1.2. Interview Protocol, Translation of Interview Question and Interview Transcript

As already indicated, data was mainly collected through face-to-face interviews using semi-structured interview questions. This was supplemented by observations and documentation. The interview protocol was designed in order to get an in-depth understanding of the views of the interviewees. The interview questions were first written in English, and then they were translated into Thai by the researcher before being used to collect the fieldwork data. As Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 371) observed, “*the use of language is very crucial for creating participatory meanings in which both interviewer and respondent understand the contextual nature of interview.*” To test accuracy and understanding of the language; the researcher asked three fellow Thai PhD students to review the translation. The three Thai PhD students were studying in the UK and had a very good command of both Thai and English languages. Following suggestions and a few amendments; they approved the list of questions in both Thai and English. Furthermore, the translation was also tested in the pilot study to confirm that the questions are understandable.

In this research, interview questions were used as the main tool for investigating how key HR actors define, identify and manage talent in the hotel industry, particularly in participating hotels in Thailand. With regards to the interview process Gill et al. (2008)

suggested that the researcher should start with simple questions followed by more complex or sensitive questions. They noted that this increased the effectiveness of the interview. The researcher adopted this guideline and started-off with general questions. In each theme, the researcher followed the same pattern of question to start with the general to the specific and sensitive issues. These allowed the relationship between the researcher and the interviewees to develop gradually; and thus it allowed the researcher to gain better in-depth views from the interviewees. Below are some of the guided questions which were used to collect the data (also see Appendix 1).

How is the best worker/talent defined in hotels?
What criteria are used to identify the quality of talent?
What factors influence the need for those qualities in talent? Why?
How might the definition of talent change in response to changes in your organisation's environment, culture, and business strategy?
Why do you think having talent is important to your hotel?
Which role of work is the most crucial in your organisation?
What is the top priority of your organisation — how could talent help support this goal?
What challenges are you facing in managing talent?
How do you deal with the issues of managing talent?
How do you attract talent to stay in your hotel? Which position role takes the responsibility in retaining talent? Why?
Any other comments? Are there any other issues that you want to suggest or mention in identifying talent and retaining talent?

At the outset of each interview, the participants were re-assured that the information provided will be dealt with confidentially, and it was also re-iterated that they had a right to opt out interviews at any stage of the process. Consent was also sort from the participants on other things such as recordings the interview; and while most consented (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Thirty-eight interviews were undertaken, of which thirty-three were tape recorded, and for the five remaining interviews notes were taken. After all the interviews had been completed, the recorded interviews were transcribed and typed by the researcher. Tape records were used to protect bias and used as evidence of what was (and not) said during interview (Gill et al., 2008). Transcribing was time consuming, with each interview material taking approximately twelve hours to transcribe depending on the quality of the tape and the depth of information. The transcribed material was then translated back into English.

3.8.2.2. Direct Non Participant Observation

In qualitative research, observations are another method that is used by researchers to gather research data. Robson (2002) notes that it is “*the appropriate technique of getting at real life in the real world*” (p. 310). Researchers observe behaviours, body-language or activities during the fieldwork (Creswell, 2014; Gill et al., 2008). Observations were chosen in this study as a way of collecting supplementary data that would help the researcher to gain richer understanding of the subject. The direct observation technique was employed on the same day and site of the hotels to support semi-structured interviews, and also to triangulate data from semi-structured interviews.

Yin (2009) contended that observations are useful in providing additional information (e.g. understanding the actual context or the phenomenon) about the research topic being studied. The information from the observation can help corroborate, contradict or substitute data from the oral language (e.g. conversation in the interview). Observations can be used as ‘supportive’ or ‘supplementary’ data collection method. This allows the researcher not to directly ask people about their views, feelings or attitude; but only watch what they do and listen to what they say (Robson, 2011). Pope and Mays (2006) stressed that the contributions of signs, laughs and lengthy pauses should not be underestimated when analysing talk, and as a minimum, these should be noted in the transcription. Moreover, during the interview process, the interviewer had opportunities to ask some additional questions about other topics related to research. Thus, for example, while waiting in the lobby for the interviewee, the researcher had an opportunity to interact with some staff who were sat in the lobby near her. She asked the member of staff “*how long she had been with the hotel, and what make her to stay?*” This was in-line with the view which suggests that a researcher can gain knowledge through interacting with the surrounding environment (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Saunders et al, 2012) and she can ask some question to seek clarification on certain issues (Sekaran, 2003).

Cavana et al. (2001) noted that there are many advantages of employing observations in research such as the fact that: it is reliable and free from interviewee bias, the researcher can note if the environment affects the outcome (e.g. cold, hot); and also, it is suitable for some specific groups that maybe difficult to access. However, this technique has also been criticised. The main criticism is that individuals may change their behaviour if they are being observed; and therefore the behaviour may not be real.

The Department of Health and Human Service (2008) and Robson (2011) suggested that observation should have proper plan in terms of what to look for, how to collect it, and site observations. Therefore, a recoding sheet and check list, observation guides, and field notes are needed in order to standardise the data collection. In this research, recording checklists and list of themes were prepared and adapted during pilot studies, and this list was constantly modified and reviewed during semi-structured interview. The guide/ questions for the observation are presented below (also see Appendix 2):

Guide/Questions for the Observation

Definition of talent

- Is the interviewee knowledgeable in wide range of working?
- To what extent do interviewees and other hotel workers speak foreign languages?
- How friendly and customer focused is the interviewees and other workers?
- Is there any issue in the hotels? If there are any, how promptly can workers deal with these issues?
- Appearance of interviewees and workers (e.g. outfit, body language)

Managing talent

- Location of hotels – other competing hotel businesses within the vicinity?
- Relationships in the organisation?
- What does the hotel provide its workers (e.g. meal, room for the employee, accommodation, transportation, training, induction)?
- Working environment in the organisation?
- Any priorities for the talent which can be noticed?

The direct observations data were collected in the hotel sites where the semi-structured interviews also took place. The researcher mainly watched what was going on and related it to the main aims and objectives of the research. This was guided by the observation guide presented above. Some additional questions were also asked to seek more understanding and clarification. However, the researcher bore in her mind that not all questions will be answered, and therefore was able to observe where the activity or behaviour was possible and available.

The notes from the observation were gathered and analysed by employing thematic analysis which will be detailed in Section 3.8.5 and it will be collaborated and triangulated with semi-structured interview and document analysis data.

3.8.2.3. Documentation

Document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods (e.g. interviews and observations) as a means of triangulation (Bowen, 2009). This is another technique that was used in this research. It is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents (Bowen, 2009). Examples of documentation that may be used include printed documents, electronic documents, website materials, letters, memoranda, agendas, administrative documents, newspaper articles, study reports, advertisement, maps, charts, application forms, survey data, radio and television program, organisational report, program proposal, website materials, and any documents related to the topic which is being research (Bowen, 2009; Cooper & Schindler, 1998; Robson, 2001; Yin, 2009). Such material helps the researcher to support the evidence from other techniques as the basic information on written papers that have been recorded without a researcher's intervention (Bowen, 2009).

Saldaña (2011) suggested that researchers should access related documents and should get full-permission. If possible, the documents should be copied or scanned. In this research, the researcher had very limited access to a photocopier or scanner to be able to copy documents, and also most of them were highly confidential and private to the

organisation. However, the researcher was able to read some of them; and notes were made from some of the documents. The document that the researcher could get access to, for example, the human resource planning (D2H4) from H4 illustrated everything in the document was well-written and it clearly listed the number of employees in each department (full-time, part-time, casual and apprenticeship employees), the key departments, job descriptions and person specifications, training programs (for each position), rewards, etc. In this plan was also a set budget for each of the activities. The other documents such as the internal information board, job description, organisation training program, annual report, skill guideline for each position/ job person specification, evaluation form, interview form, application form, presentation slides, organisation website, photos, staff benefit and opportunities, human resource management guide/manning guide, hotel's map (see Table 3.13 below) were also accessed in order to support the verbal interview.

Document Code	Document	Source
D1H1	Internal Information Board	H1
D2H1	Job description for Guest Services Agent	H1
D1H2	Internal Information Board	H2
D1H3	Human Resource Planning	H3
D1H4	Annual Report /Training Program	H4
D2H4	Human Resource Planning	H4
D1H12	Training Program	H12
D1H13	Hotel's budget	H13
D1H14	Annual report	H14
D1H17	Internal Information Board	H17
D2H17	Skill guide of the restaurant (which require the candidate to sign they understood skills needed)	H17
D3H17	Evaluation Form for Expert	H17
D4H17	Interview form	H17
D5H17	Application form	H17
D6H17	Job description for food and beverage expert	H17
D1H20	Presentation slide of Human capital development	H20
D2H20	Training program	H20
D3H20	Website	H20
D4H20	Internal Information Board	H20
D5H20	Photos	H20
D1H22	Staff benefit and opportunities	H22
D2H22	human resource management guide	H22
D1H23	Internal Information Board	H23
D2H23	Job description	H23
D1H24	Internal Information Board	H24
D1H26	Website (news)	H26
D2H26	Website	H26
D3H26	Website of the workers who get the honorees	H26
D1H29	Job description	H29
D1-Others	Hotel's Map Patong, Pattaya, Bangkok, Aownang	Other documents from outside the participating hotels
D2-Others	Bank of Thailand report	Other document form outside the participating hotels

Table 3.13: List of Documents

In addition, a list of themes to be observed was prepared and adapted during the pilot study; and this list was constantly modified and reviewed during the semi-structured interviews. The guide/ questions for the review of the documentation are also presented below (also see Appendix 3):

Guide/Questions for Review of the Documentation

Definition of talent

- What kind of people does the hotel currently need? Are there specific reasons for those needs?
- What criteria or specific skills are needed by the hotel?
- What position/role is considered to be most important?

Managing talent

- How does the organisation attract and retain their talent?
- Any challenges and problems of managing talent?

The notes and documents were gathered and analysed by employing thematic analysis which will be detailed in Section 3.8.5; which will be collaborated and triangulated with semi-structured interviews and direct observation data.

3.8.2.4. Barriers in Data Collection

The researcher encountered and had to overcome many barriers during data collection process and data analysis. These are given below:

- 1) Transcribing the main data (tape records) collected through semi-structured interviews was a time consuming process. On average it took about 12 hours to transcribe each interview.
- 2) Also time consuming was coding, categorising, and developing themes. This entailed reading and re-reading the scripts again to ensure that all issues are captured and analysed.
- 3) In five of the interviews, the researcher had to take notes about the whole interview as the participants objected to being recorded. Furthermore, due to lack of access to photocopying machines, the researcher also took notes on the documentation observed.

3.8.3. Ethical Issues

Ethics in research are identified by Saunders et al. (2012, p. 226) as “...*the standard of behaviour that guides your conduct in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it.*” This means that when studying people’s behaviour or asking them questions, the researcher has to bear in mind his/her values and responsibilities. In making a decision on the benefits of conducting a research; the associated risks, dangers and ethical issues should be addressed and must also be managed (Ryan, 2011; Silverman, 2011). Thus, before conducting the fieldwork research, there is an obligation from the Salford University for the researcher to apply for ethical approval; addressing issues such how the confidentiality of interviewees, observations and documentations would be observed. The approval for this research was granted by the Research Governance and Ethics Committee (see Appendix 4).

Prior to the interviews, the interviewer sent invitations and information emails to hotels which are members of THA seeking their consent to participate in the research. After having the permission through a signed consent form (see Appendix 6), time and place of the interview were arranged on the convenience of the participants. Initially, the first four participants who first accepted in the purposive sampling signed the consent form. Later on they referred more people to allow the researcher to make contact; thus, the emails containing information and consent form were sent to twenty-five referral participants; these also seeking for the consent.

Before starting the interview, the interviewer also sought permission to tape record the interview and the participants were informed that they could withdraw their consent anytime during the interview. As Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (1994, p. 366) stressed, “*the essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity*”. Thus, the interviewees were also informed that information given during the process would be completely anonymous in the thesis. Further assurances were also given that any personal information gathered during the interview would be treated with full confidentiality.

With reference to access to relevant documentation, there was very limited access to a photocopier or scanner to copy the documents, and also most of them were highly classified as private and confidential by the organisation. However, the researcher was able to read some of them and notes were made from some the documents. The documents were collected in accordance with gaining full permission of the organisation; as they were highly confidential. These were informed in advance to allow the participants to prepare the document. Then, they were coded and analysed. Similarly, the participants were informed that direct observation will be taking place on the same day as the interview was taking place, and what the researcher intended to observe.

3.8.4. Pilot Study

Yin (2009) stated that a pilot study is crucial since it helps the researcher to refine the data collection plans, with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed. This means that the researcher can share the data collection instrument with others to ensure that questions are designed appropriately, are understandable, and interpreted as intended. Undertaking these pilot studies will help to enhance the quality of data collection (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Thus, this research conducted three pilot studies — a general manager from a Thai branded hotel; a human resource department manager and a front office manager from an international branded hotel. The participants were chosen as covering criteria of four or five star-rated hotels, large hotels, and ranges of managerial position (See Table 3.14. below).

Position	Code	Age	Gender	Experiences/ Years	Hotel/Star Rating
General Managers	PGMH1	48	Male	18	4
Human Resource Managers	PHRMH2	38	Male	10	5
Front Office Manager	PLMH2	40	Female	12	5

Table 3.14: List of Interviewees in the Pilot Study Stage

The pilot studies cover all the target criteria of participant in order to ensure that the data collecting plan and instruments are designed appropriately and feasible to when it use in the fieldwork. All, data collection techniques were piloted. They are discussed below.

As mentioned earlier, this research collected data using semi-structured interviews, documentation, and observations. Pilot studies were conducted so as to test and develop data collection techniques, and also to test and develop the data analysis methods. The strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the data collection techniques were noted and modified in preparation of the main study. The pilot studies also helped the researcher to get a clearer understanding of the interview questions, and thus for example some repetitive questions were deleted and other useful questions added. Furthermore, the research objectives and research question can be modified and developed in this stage (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2012). The pilot study also gave the researcher the opportunity to assess whether the number of questions could fit within the allotted length of time — 1.5 hours.

In the pilot study the research also had to gain access to documentation to decide if they could be used within the main research. However, there was limited access to some of the documents which the organisations viewed as private and confidential. Examples of the documentation included the human resources planning guide, application forms, and evaluation forms checklists.

In addition to semi-structured interviews and documentation; observations were also piloted.

The table below evaluates the usefulness of each of the instruments used during the pilot study. The focus is on the problems and limitation of the instrument, and indication of how the instrument was modified or developed further following the pilot study.

Data Collection Technique	Problem and Limitation	Development	Implemented for the Main Research Study
Semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The participants may prefer the term 'best people' rather than 'talent' -The participants gave additional information which can add to prepared question -Some repetitive questions were removed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Modified unclear interview questions -Added interview questions -Deleted interview repetitive questions 	Yes
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Difficulties in accessing the documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Re-plan to take note instead of collected the document from the participants and understand that the high confidential document cannot be accessed. 	Yes
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -There are many departments in the hotels -Not all themes can be observed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Plan for the list objective of research and where to get it from- It only can be observed if it occurred during the day of the data collection 	Yes

Table 3.15: Implementation of Pilot Study

This section discussed how the pilot study in this research was implemented and the associated limitations/problems of each of the instruments that were to be used in the main study. Thus, for example, the researcher had access to documentations and observation to see if they could be used within the main research.

Although, there were some corrections and revisions that were made on the pilot study instruments, these changes and corrections did not fundamentally change the primarily

instruments or the data collection plan. Therefore, the findings from the three pilot studies would be included in the main study analysis.

3.8.5. Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis Approach

Data analysis is one of the most important steps in qualitative research. It is the systematic search for meaning from the qualitative data in order to communicate with others what the researcher has gained. Brotherton (2008) and Hatch (2002) noted that the analysis in qualitative research (inductive approach) allows the researcher to understand patterns, connections, themes, relationship in order to interpret its significance and produce meaningful explanation or generate theory.

Data analysis process needs to be part of the overarching plans, and should start when the data is being collected during the fieldwork data until the formal data analysis (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Robson, 2011; Yin, 2014). Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p.2 cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 105) indicated that “*we should never collect data without substantial analysis going on simultaneously.*” Other considerations that the researcher has to be prepared for are noted by Kvale and Brinkmann (cited in 2009 in Robson, 2011, pp. 300-301); and are:

- How shall I conduct my interviews so that the results and meanings can be analysed in a coherent and creative way?
- How do I go about finding out what the interview tells me about what I want to know?
- How can the interviews assist in extending my knowledge of the phenomena I am investigating?

For this reason the researcher started her analysis throughout her data collection, and revised the analysis again after all data collection was gathered.

It has been argued that data analysis within the context of the realism paradigm does not entail recording large amounts of transcript data, as is the case in constructivist or

critical theorist type studies (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). While constructivists and radical theorists often use analytical methods that track and count every word and phrase from an interview, sometimes using computer programs to do this (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), Realism research on the other hand, seeks only contingencies, structures, mechanisms, connections or relationships that help explain phenomena (Sobh and Perry, 2006), and which are meaningful as explanations to those interviewees involved. The investigation and explanation of phenomena in realism research is achieved via note taking and analysis, and subsequent triangulation via other methods. In realism-based research methodologies, only those perceptions relevant to the reality being investigated are felt worthy to be examined and recorded (Sobh and Perry, 2006). This means that finding categories or codes for data can happen during the data gathering process, and is achieved with the participation of the interviewee. These categories are then subject to further analysis and refinement during subsequent stages of research.

Huberman and Mile (1994 in Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 54-55) noted that in qualitative research data analysis is achieved through:

- Data reduction — focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data into more manageable and understandable forms.
- Data display — presenting data as an organised and compressed assembly of information that permits conclusions to be analytically drawn.

Yin (2014, pp 136-142) suggested the following three guidelines for data analysis:

- Rely on theoretical propositions — theoretical orientation guided the analysis,
- Working with data from ground up,
- Examining plausible rival explanations.

Examples of analysis technique in qualitative research include the grounded theory, narrative analysis content analysis, pattern matching, and thematic analysis (Berg & Lune, 2012; Brotherton, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2009). Content analysis is a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of the contents of a study in order to identify patterns, themes, categories, bias and meaning (Berg & Lune, 2012; Morse & Field, 1996). It is the most commonly used data analysis technique in qualitative research. It aims to derive meaning and make inferences from textual or visual data

(Brotherton, 2008). The sources of data in content analysis can be all sorts of recorded communication (transcripts of interviews, discourses, protocols of observations, video tapes, and documents) (Creswell, 2014).

Despite the popularity of content analysis, it involves establishing categories and then counting the number of instances in which that category is used in a text or image. It determines the frequency of the occurrence of particular categories; and therefore content analysis mainly relies on counting attributes in data.

Meanwhile, thematic analysis goes beyond content analysis. This has invariably been described as a technique for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Robson, 2011). According to Joffe (2012) thematic analysis is:

“The method for identifying and analysing patterns of meaning in a data set and illustrates theme which are important in description of the phenomenon under study. The result of thematic analysis is the highlight the most salient constellations of meaning present in the data set.” (p.9)

The analysis process which is used when undertaking thematic analysis is presented in Table 3.16 below.

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

Table 3.16: Thematic analysis process

This thesis will adopt thematic data analysis process. The full process of qualitative data analysis and the model which is used for data analysis in this research is presented in Figure 3.3 below.

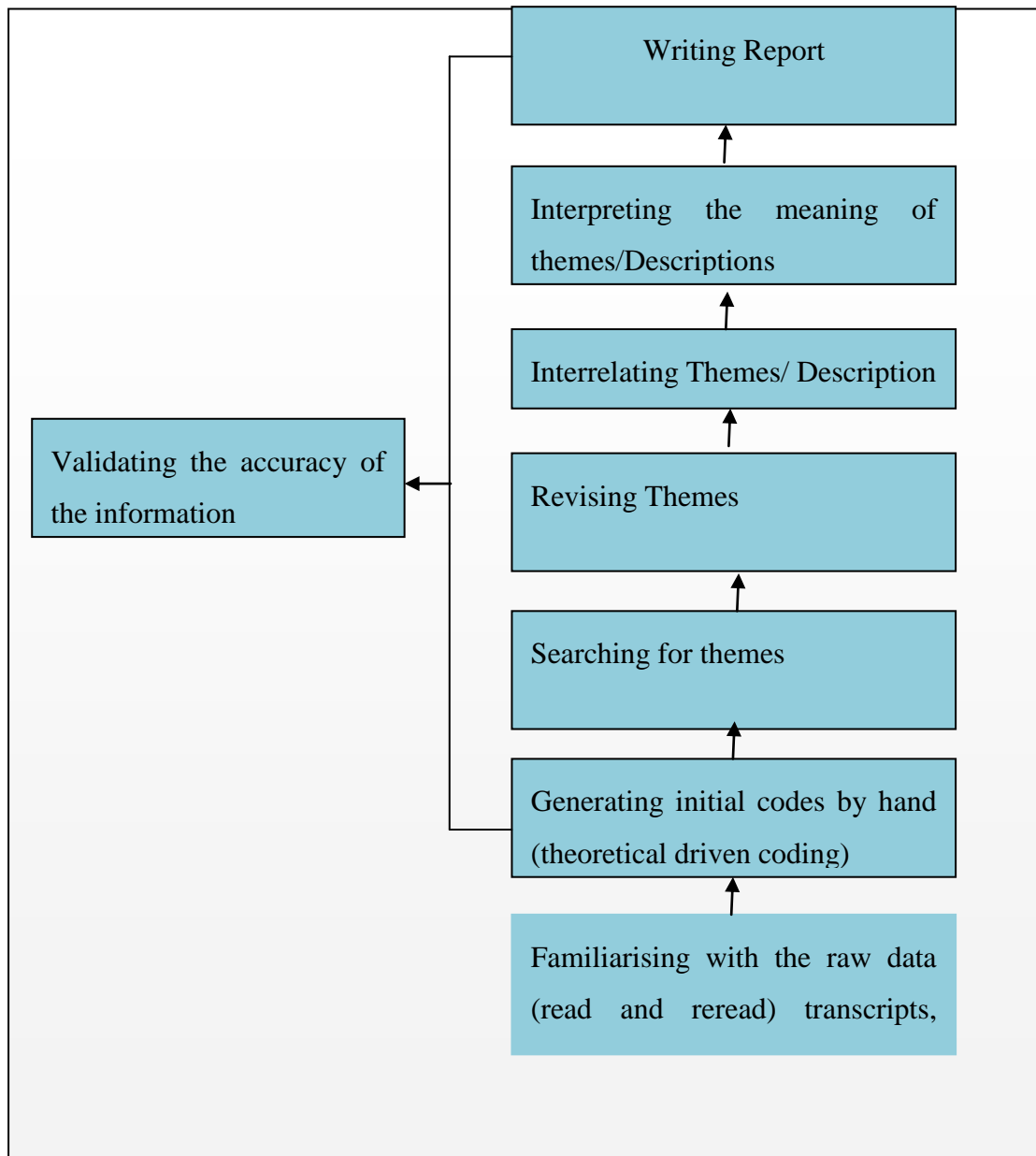


Figure 3.3: The Processes of Thematic Data Analysis

(Source: Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 86-93; Creswell, 2014, p. 197; Robson, 2011)

The process of data analysis was guided by the flow-diagram in Figure 3.3; and the accompanying details of each stage are given below:

- Firstly, tape recorded interviews were transcribed. Also, the researcher was writing notes during interviews; as well as notes from observations and other documents.
- These were returned back to the participants in order to recheck the correction of the transcripts.
- Since the transcripts, notes and most other documents were in Thai, the researcher translated them into English.
- To get a better understanding of all raw data that had been collected the researcher read through all the documents again.
- Coding from the relevant quotes was undertaken, and the quotes/ideas were then categorised into themes.
- The different themes were then interpreted – according to whether they addressed questions on the definition and identification of talent; or whether they addressed managing talent in hotel industry. The themes and categories that emerged from the data analysis are discussed in the findings and discussion chapters that follow.

The substantial amount of data collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation was analysed manually (See Appendix 10, example of thematic analysis – Importance of talent in the Thai hospitality). Rather than manually analysing the data, the researcher can opt to use computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software such as the QDA package (Robson, 2011). He noted that the software package benefit the researcher as follows:

- They provide an organised single location storage system for all stored material
- They give quick and easy acces to coded material without using cut and paste techniques
- They can handle large amouts of data very quickly
- They can anlalyse differences, similarities and relationship between coded elements (p. 472).

However, using some software may have some drawbacks. For example:

- There may be difficulties in changing, or reluctance to change, categorised of information once they have been established.
- Particular programs tend to impose specific approaches to data analysis

Despite some benefits of using the computer software, the researcher opted to analyse the data manually because this allows her to get close to the data. The researcher can cut, paste, highlight snippets of data and move it around.

3.8.6. Quality Issues in Qualitative Research / Rigour

Burrell & Morgan (1979); Kvale (1995) suggest that in any research, issues of the data quality have to be considered and addressed carefully. Maxwell (2013, p. 124) indicated that qualitative researchers typically deal with questions of validity or any particular events and processes that can lead to invalid conclusions. Some of the issues that might arise during a research are addressed below:

- **Researcher bias** — selection of data that fit the researcher's existing theory, goals, preconceptions, and the selection of data that 'stand out' to the researcher.
- **Reactivity** — influence of the researcher on the setting or individual cases being studied. The researcher has to try to control for such effects. Thus, the goal should be to minimize variability in the outcome variables arising due to the researcher's actions or inactions. However, in qualitative research eliminating the actual influences of the researcher is impossible. For example, interview the reactivity/ flexibility for the researcher is impossible because the researcher is part of the world he or she studies.

From a Realist perspective, qualitative research can be evaluated in terms of objectivity, which can be further divided into validity and reliability (Hammersley, 1987). Validity, in this sense, essentially refers to the idea of truth. Thus from the Realist perspective, research results are valid or 'true' if they accurately represent the phenomena that they claim to describe or explain. Results are reliable to the extent to which a procedure or method can be repeated by other people, in other places and produces results which are theoretical sound. In other words, a broad definition of validity would be that of

accuracy, and of reliability, would be that of theoretical or literal replication. Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Collis and Hussey, 2009), noted that taking this criteria in cognisance while planning and conducting research is important as it improves the quality of the research.

Validity, reliability and generalisability are mostly associated with positivist research (Kvale, 1995); but are nonetheless concepts that are generally used in order to assess the truth of research in all cases. However, Guba and Lincoln, (1994) write that other terms, which arise from a more natural use of language and can thus be used to determine truth. Lincoln and Guba (1985) concluded that alternative terms that can be used (for judging the quality of qualitative research) are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (cited in Hoepfl, 1997). Thus in order to eliminate the threat to quality, qualitative research should be measured against the four criteria presented in Table 3.17 to determine the quality of the research (Collis and Hussey, 2009, p. 182) which are then discussed in detail below.

Conventional Terms (Quantitative)	Naturalistic Terms (Qualitative)
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Conformability

Table 3.17: Comparison of criteria for judging the quality of quantitative and qualitative research

(Source: Hoepfl, 1997, p. 7)

1) Credibility — demonstrates that the research was conducted in such a manner that the subject of the enquiry was correctly identified and described. Credibility can be improved through the researcher involving him/herself in the study for a prolonged period of time, through triangulation (using different sources of evidence), and through peer debriefing by colleagues on a continuous basis. Among those techniques, the

credibility of this study was enhanced by triangulation of data collection from different sources of evidence such as interviews, observations and documentation.

This researcher considered the triangulation issues in designing and conducting the overall research. Triangulation is a way of enhancing the quality of the research. It can be classified into four categories (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Neuman, 2011; Yin, 2009):

- Data triangulation — this is achieved when data are collected in different times and from different sources. According to Bowen (2009); Robson (2011), data triangulation provides a confluence of evidence by examining information from different methods; and allows researcher to corroborate finding across the methods. This is expected to reduce bias especially in single studies. More-so, protecting the researcher from artificially employing a single source of data (which may lead to bias issue) (Patton, 2002).
- Investigator triangulation — this is achieved when the researcher offers different perspectives, backgrounds, and social characteristics to what is being researched.
- Theory triangulation — this is feasible when the research is designed to use the multiple theory perspectives.
- Method triangulation — this can be achieved through using mixed-methods of data collection and data analysis, or mixed research methods (quantitative and qualitative).

Data triangulation was used in this research. The researcher collected data using three different techniques: semi-structured interviews (main data collection), observations, and documentation data. The last two data collection methods were used to support the main method. Gathering data based on this triangulation allows the researcher to gain a richer understanding of the subject matter from different sources (data triangulation) (Robson, 2011); and to avoid the dangers of bias which might arise from analysing a single source of data. By using different methods, the researcher increases the chances of capturing all relevant data which might have been missed if using interviews only.

2) Transferability — this is concerned with whether the findings can be generalised to another situation. In this research, the researcher cannot guarantee the transferability of the findings but rather can only provide sufficient information that can then be used by

other scholars to determine whether the findings are applicable to their new situation. Therefore, transferability depends on the degree of similarity between the original situation and the new situation.

3) Dependability — this illustrates that the research process is systematic, rigorous, and well documented. In this study the list of interview questions was prepared in advance; and this ensured that the researcher was consistent during the interviews and that everybody dealt with similar questions. The researcher ensured the consistency of data collected not only by supplementing semi-structured interviews by documentations and observations, in some participating hotels the interviews were conducted with more than one person. The main aim is to ensure the consistency.

4) Conformability — this should be used as a criterion when the study has described the research process fully and it is possible to assess whether the findings flow from the data. The aim is to ensure that the data is neutral of researchers' interpretation. All the data collected was gathered, recorded meticulously, and used systematically.

The researcher documented all the research processes and procedures, and checked and reviewed the data continuously during the study to improve dependability and the conformity of study findings.

3.9. Summary Of Chapter 3

This chapter focused on the research methodology and included an overview of the research methods used in this study. Furthermore, it discussed the two main research philosophical paradigms (interpretivism and positivism), exploring situations in which each is suited. It was concluded that this research will follow the realism paradigm as it is more suited to meeting the research objectives. Following a critical review of the research approach (inductive and deductive approaches), the researcher concluded that using a combination of both approaches would be more appropriate. Furthermore, research methods (qualitative and quantitative) were discussed including the advantages

and disadvantages of the individual method. The reason for choosing the qualitative approach in this study was given.

The case study strategy and the data collection techniques were discussed as part of the research plan. For purposes of this research, the main technique was interviews; and these were supported by document analysis and observations. Finally, the researcher discussed data analysis techniques, and explained how the researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the data.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this research whose aim was to investigate the applicability of the concept of talent within the hospitality industry. The analysis focuses on the applicability of the concept of talent in the hospitality industry and how talent is managed within selected hotels in Thailand. The main data source for this research was collected via semi-structured interviews, and this main data source was supplemented by collecting data from documents and observations. The use of different methods ensured that the triangulation of data from different sources was achieved, and this served to validate the findings.

In sections 4.2 and 4.6, the findings from the study are presented based on the semi-structured interviews with 38 participants; and the findings from documentation and observations where applicable. Charts, tables, graphs and diagrams have been used to summarise the findings and this should help in understanding the results. The responses from the interviews were analysed using coding and categorisation, and themes generated thereof. The relationships between the themes are explored in this chapter. Meanwhile, the documentary analysis was based on the codes of words, phrases, and sentences written in the participating organisation's documents. These were related to the research objectives and used to support the themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The notes from direct observations are also analysed to support the findings in the semi-structured interviews. In this particular case any part of words and phrases that relate to the research objectives are considered (see Table 4.2).

Thus, the research aimed to uncover the relationship between the definition and identification of talent, and qualities that are perceived as constituting talent by the different participating hotels. The research also aimed to investigate the factors that influence these definitions. Furthermore, the research aimed to investigate how talent is managed.

4.2. The Research Sample: Study Respondents

The data for the research was collected mainly through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with key human resources (HR) actors such as CEOs/General managers, line managers, etc. and as discussed in Chapter 3 (Research Methodology), there were 38 participants (see Table 4.1 below).

Position	Code	Age	Gender	Experiences/Years	Hotel
General Managers, Owners, Residence managers, and Chief Executives	GM1	37	Male	12	H1
	GM2	52	Male	25	H2
	GM3	56	Male	40	H3
	GM4	55	Male	25	H4
	GM5	55	Male	30	H5
	GM6	32	Female	5	H6
	GM7	45	Female	15	H7
	GM8	55	Male	20	H8
Human Resource Directors, Human Resource Managers, Assistant HR managers	HRM1	42	Female	10	H9
	HRM2	37	Female	6	H10
	HRM3	45	Male	16	H11
	HRM4	34	Female	7	H12
	HRM5	42	Female	12	H13
	HRM6	39	Female	10	H14
	HRM7	48	Male	20	H15
	HRM8	42	Male	15	H16
	HRM9	43	Male	10	H17
	HRM10	38	Male	10	H18
	HRM11	39	Male	13	H19
	HRM12	37	Female	10	H20
	HRM13	36	Male	10	H21
	HRM14	38	Male	7	H22
	HRM15	45	Male	10	H23
	HRM16	42	Female	10	H24
	HRM17	42	Male	5	H25
	HRM18	49	Male	9	H26
Line Managers (Front office managers, Housekeeping managers, Food and beverage managers)	LM1	38	Female	14	H27
	LM2	42	Male	15	H28
	LM3	45	Female	18	H29
	LM4	38	Female	10	H6
	LM5	42	Female	15	H6
	LM6	37	Male	8	H25
	LM7	37	Male	12	H20
	LM8	35	Female	10	H20
	LM9	45	Male	17	H20
	LM10	39	Male	10	LM19
	LM11	35	Female	6	LM26
	LM12	42	Female	15	H14

Table 4.1: List of Interviewees

The distribution of the participants (according to their roles in the organisation) is as follows: CEOs/general managers (21%), line managers (32%), and HR professionals (47%). In terms of organisational brand, both Thai and international branded hotels took part, and the distribution is as follows: International chain hotels (31%), Thai chain hotels (24%), and Thai individual (45%). All this demographic information relating to the participating hotels is presented pictorially in Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 below.

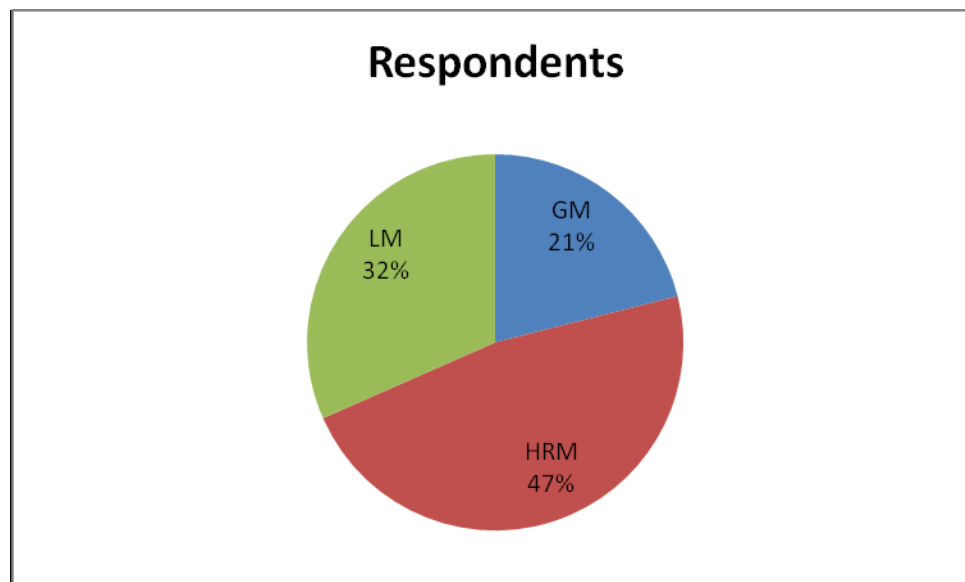


Figure 4.1: Percentage of Respondents

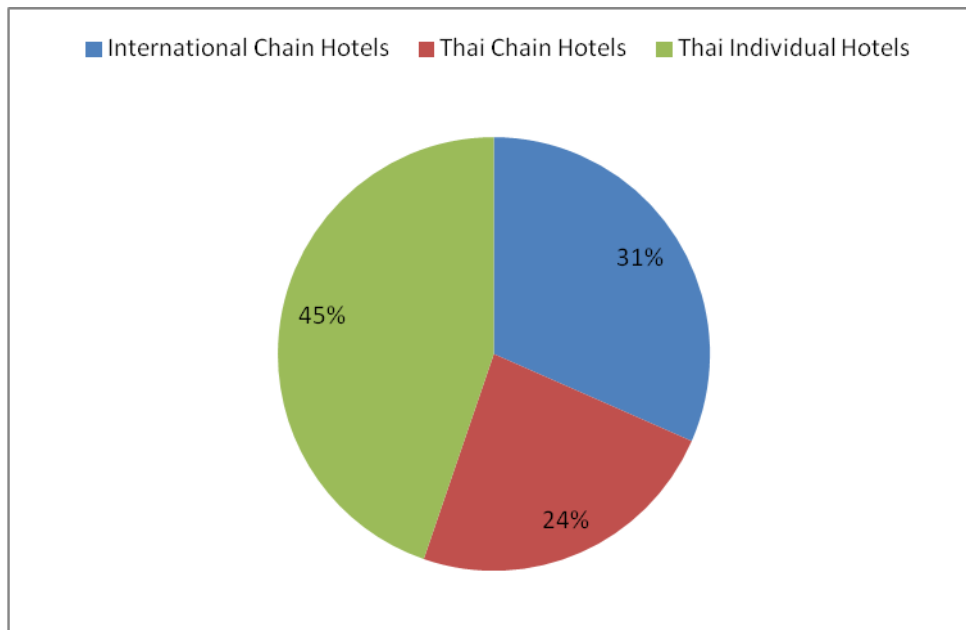


Figure 4.2: Percentage of Participants form Thai Branded Hotels and International Branded Hotels

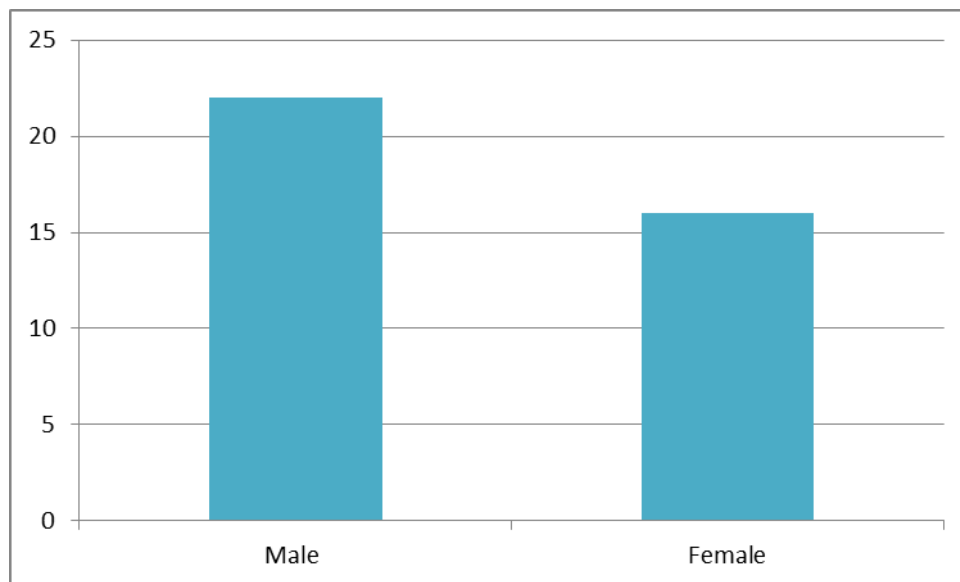


Figure 4.3: Number of Respondents by Gender

As indicated earlier, the findings and analysis are based on the research questions/objectives. The relationship between the research objectives, research questions, and data collection methods are summarised in Table 4.2.

Research Objectives	Research Questions	Interview Questions	Data Collection Methods		
			Interview	Observation	Documentation
1) To critically investigate how the concept of talent applies in hospitality industry	(1a). How is talent defined among the participating hotels?	How is talent defined by the particular hotels? What should talent mean in your hotel?	✓	✓	✓
	(1b). What are the criteria used to identify talented workers and what are the factors which influence how talented workers are identified? And why?	What criteria are used to identify the quality of talent? What should they have to be possessed in order to be called talent? What factors influence the need for those qualities in talent? Why? How might the definition of talent change in response to changes in your organisation's environment, culture, and business strategy?	✓	✓	✓
2) To critically evaluate how the participating hotels manage talents?	(2a). Why talent is important to the hotel and its challenges to manage them? (2b). How do participating hotels within THA retain talents? (How do participating hotels within THA manage talent in order to cope with the challenges?)	Why do you think having talent is important to your hotel? Which role of work is the most crucial in your organisation? What is the top priority of your organisation — how could talent help support this goal? What challenges are faced by the hotel when managing talent? How do participating hotels retain talents? How do you make talent to stay in your hotel? Which position role takes the responsibility in retaining talent? Why? Any other comments on improving talent retention?	✓	✓	✓

Table 4.2: Summary of Research Objectives, Research Questions, and Data Collection Methods

4.3. First Research Question: Definition and Application of the Concept of Talent by Participating Thai Hotels in the Hospitality Industry

This section presents the findings on how the concept of talent is applied to the hospitality industry by the participating hotels. This will provide an in-depth understanding of how the concept of talent is applied in this particular industry. The aspects that are discussed in this section include the definition, identification, and qualities that are perceived as constituting talent according to the participating hotels. As indicated earlier, the analysis is linked to the research objectives (to critically investigate how the concept of talent applies in hospitality industry); and is also based on research questions — how are talents defined among the participating hotels? What are the criteria used to identify talented workers? What are the factors that influence how talented workers are identified? The findings are based on the main data collection method (semi-structured interviews) which is supplemented by documentation and observations.

4.3.1. Results from the Semi-structured interviews: Definitions

As already indicated above, semi-structured interviews were used to investigate how the concept of talent is applied by the respondents from the participating hotels. The section starts-off by confirming the existence of talent within the domain of the hospitality industry. It then focuses on how the concept is defined, identified and the qualities which participating hotels use to describe talent.

The results from the semi-structured interviews revealed that the concept of talent is commonly used among the participants, and that it describes individuals who have high ability (high performance), and contribute greatly to the organisation success. High performance is usually measured based on previous performances, and this is expected to be an indicator of future performance. The participants were asked whether they were familiar with the term ‘talent’; and how the concept is used in their work area. This question was intended to confirm that they understood the background of the term

‘talent’. Not surprisingly, all participants answered ‘yes’ that they were familiar with the term. For example, HRM12 stated that *“talent has been used in the field of HR (human resource) for many years.”* In support, GM5 stated that *“we have been trying to bring the idea of talent to our hotel for a number of years now....”* There was a general consensus among the participants that talent is someone who contributes greatly to the organisation. For example, LM3 stated that *“talent is the main source of assisting the organisation to be successful.”* Similarly, GM5 indicated that *“without talent in our organisation, we will be losers in today’s business environment.”*

Figure 4.4 represents some of the phrases or terms that the participants commonly used in defining and identifying talent within the hospitality industry. These phrases or terms have been ranked according to how frequently they were ‘used’ by the participants, and the ranking has also been deemed to be an indicator of importance.

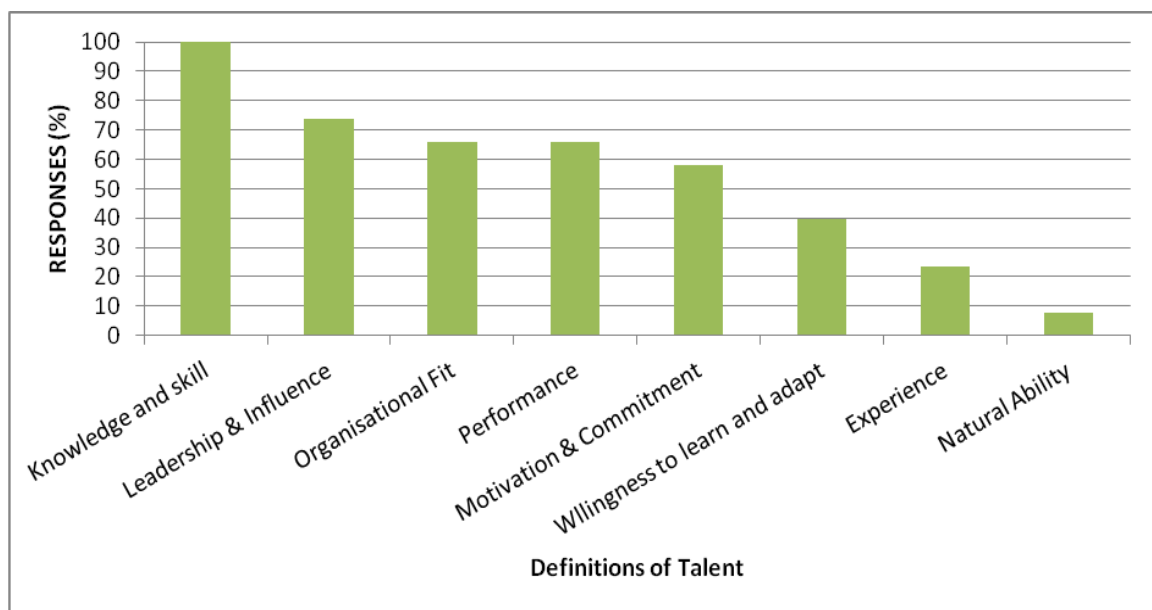


Figure 4.4: Summary of perception of talent definition

From Figure 4.4, we can see that there are various phrases (or terms) which were adopted by the participants to define and identify talent. Some of the terms which are commonly used by participants to define talent include ‘knowledge and skills’,

‘leadership and influence’ and ‘organisational fit’. Furthermore, an individual’s ‘performance’, ‘motivation and commitment’, willingness and adaptation, and experiences are some of other qualities used to define talent among the participating hotels. These findings are discussed in detail below.

4.3.1.1. Higher knowledge and skills related to work

Job related knowledge and skills were some of the skills required of talent according to participating hotels. For example, HRM3 stated that “*talent should have above standard knowledge and skills.*” This view was further supported by LM10 who noted that “*the talented individuals should use their high knowledge and skills in order to contribute great performance towards work; which would result in greater customer’s satisfaction in (our) products/services.*” The high knowledge and skills related to work will be further discussed in Sections 4.3.2.1 and 4.3.2.2. (Individual competence – soft knowledge and skills and hard knowledge and skills) below.

4.3.1.2. Leadership and influence

In addition to high knowledge and skills, the talent in the hospitality industry was also defined in terms of individuals who are leaders, and are influential to the others in the organisation. For example, GM5 noted that it is “*not only high knowledge and skills*” but that “*talent should also possess leadership skills so as to be able to influence other workers to work like they do.*” This definition of talent as leadership and influence will be further presented in section 4.3.2.1 (Management Knowledge and Skills) and Section 4.3.4 (talent is more managerial/key positions rather than all workers).

4.3.1.3. Organisational fit

One of the qualities which were identified as very important by the Thai hospitality industry was organisational-fit. The respondents noted that in order to define talent, knowledge, skills and the working style of workers have to fit in with the organisation; that is, there has to be organisational-fit. For example, LM3 noted that “*the knowledge*

and skills of talented individuals should match their work. Also, these should be in line with the direction of organisation". This is explored further in Section 4.3.5 (Talent is more context dependent rather than transferable).

4.3.1.4. High performance or high potential

Talent was also defined as high performers or high potential individuals, according to the Thai hospitality industry. This can be seen from their past work performance records. In addition, evidence in records of past working performance can assist the organisation to forecast future leaders. More detail will be presented in Section 4.3.2.5. (Contribution) and Section 4.3.4. (Talent is more managerial/key positions rather than all workers).

4.3.1.5. Motivation, Commitment and Willingness to learn and adapt

The other qualities used to define talent among the respondents were in terms of 'willingness to learn and adapt'. Thus, talent was defined as individuals who possess standard knowledge, skills, and are willing to learn and grow in a particular job. HRM2 noted that *"talent is someone who has appropriate knowledge, skills, experiences....but are driven by the desire to learn ways to even be better; and more importantly they have to love their job and want to grow in it."* These were the combination of qualities that were identified as signifying talent. HRM12 was of the opinion that *"talent have to work well, reaching a good standard"* and also *"good at managing people"*. The notion that "talent" has to be good at managing people appears to be related to ideas raised by Michaels et al (2001) when he discussed managerial talent. Thus, rather than talent referring to a person with high knowledge and skills only, it can also mean individuals who have the motivation and commitment to the job (commitment to the organisation and the industry). This definition will be discussed in detail in the Section 4.3.2.4 (Commitment including commitment to work; commitment to organisation; and commitment to the industry).

4.3.1.6. Experiences in related work

Talent was defined as someone who has gained experiences and skills through the education system, and also job related experiences. The combinations of these form a well-rounded talented individual. This combination of qualities can be gained over time and through adopting a hands-on approach. GM8 indicated that *“to become talent is not a one day process, but rather it needs time because they may have some sort of education that they learn in the universities but more than that they should have had some experiences. Thus in this respect they can learn from all angles.”* Talent is one who is able to deal with all these experiences well and readily apply them in new situations. We further discuss in Section 4.3.5. how the experiences can be transferred to the context of the organisation.

4.3.1.7. Abilities: Natural versus nurtured ability

Another consideration in the definition of talent was whether talent is from nature or in-born. Perhaps it is not surprising that almost none of the participants defined talent as purely natural abilities among the participating hotels. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.3.3 where talent refers more to an acquired ability rather than purely natural ability.

We note that that the definitions of talent in each criteria are related to each other. While high knowledge, skills and some experiences are fundamental in the definition of talent, organisational-fit is also extremely important. Furthermore, talented individuals have to be motivated and willing to learn and adapt themselves to the organisation. This ensures that they can contribute to high performance and potentially become future leaders of the organisation. These criteria of defining talent will further be discussed in 4.3.2.1 – 4.3.2.5 below.

In addition to the terms that are ‘commonly used’ to describe talent, another closely related issue that came-up during interviews were the qualities that participants look for

in potential candidates. This essentially addressed the question of “*what criteria/quality the participants use to identify talent?*” These qualities are presented in Figure 4.5. These have also been ranked based on how frequently the qualities were identified by the participants.

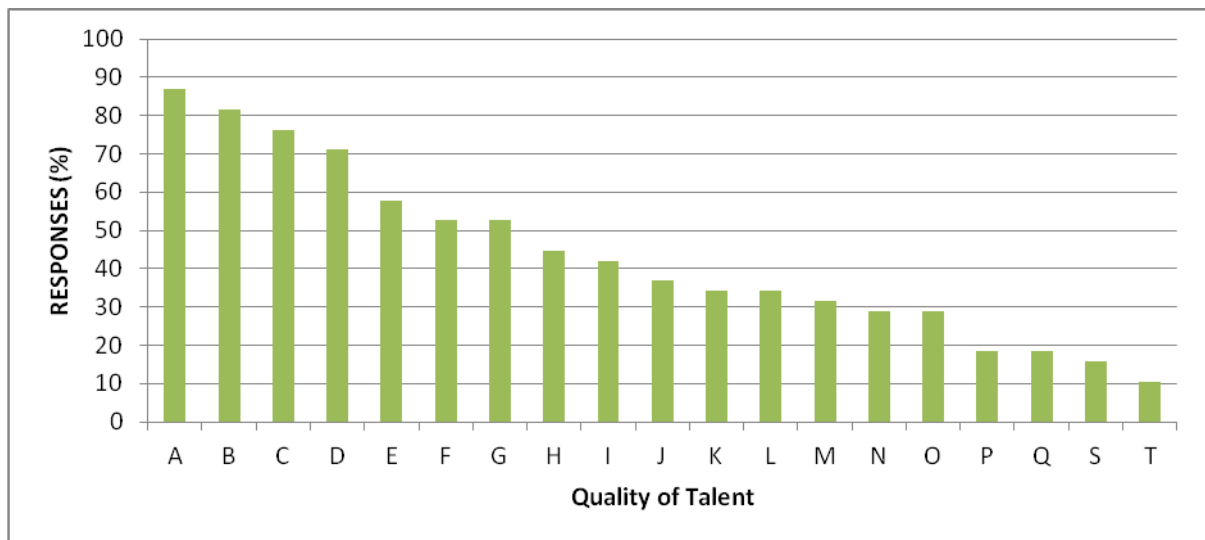


Figure 4.5: Qualities of Talent

Key to Coding of the Descriptions of Qualities of Talent in Figure 4.5.

Code	Descriptions
A	Knowledge of the industry and work
B	Communication skills
C	Management knowledge and skills
D	Service Mindedness
E	Sharing and team-working
F	Contribution to the customers
G	Good appearance
H	Commitment to organisation
I	Public relations skill
J	Commitment to work
K	Experiences
L	Motivation of co-workers
M	Problem Solving
N	Open-mindedness
O	Positive attitude
P	Commitment to industry
Q	Patience and respectfulness
S	Understanding the human needs
T	Computer knowledge and skills

The responses indicated that, for example, 'knowledge of the industry', 'communication skills', 'service mindedness' and 'contribution to customers' are among some of the highly sought after qualities according to the participants. In a customer facing industry

where the quality of the service that is provided to customers is paramount, and where this will invariably determine the potential for ‘repeat business/customers’; it is probably not surprising that ‘communication skills’ and ‘service mindedness’ are among the extremely important qualities. The participants generally observed that some qualities such as service mindedness are harder to teach. Having individuals who possess these qualities from the onset is therefore a good starting position.

The responses from the participants indicated that the combination of the attributes, qualities and high performance when added together constitute ‘talent’ within the domain of the Thai hospitality industry (hotel sector). Therefore, the term talent refers to individuals who possess leadership, knowledge, skills, and potential; and are thus able to use these abilities to contribute good performance for the organisation and also supplement other available resources in the organisations.

Based on the responses from the participants, the results of the themes and ideas that emerged are presented in detail below.

4.3.2. Results from the Semi-structured Interviews: Talent Definition and Identification

The qualities identified by participants as constituting talent are presented in Figure 4.5, and these can essentially be categorised into three qualities: capability comprising soft-knowledge and skills and hard knowledge and skills which fit the hotels’ strategy and culture; commitment to work; loyalty to the hotel; and contribution to customer satisfaction and motivate co-worker to work well. The discussion and conclusion chapters use this categorisation when discussing the research findings.

Meanwhile, the equivalent terms that are used by other authors such as Ulrich and Smallwood (2012) to categorise these qualities are competence, commitment and competence; and this findings chapter will therefore present the research findings using their categorisation. The reason for adopting this categorisation in the findings chapter is to enable comparison with other comparable research findings which use this

categorisation. Section 5.2.1 we will discuss in detail why the terms capability, commitment, loyalty and contribution are viewed as more suitable terms to use within the context of the Thai hotel sector.

The qualities identified by the participants are presented below.

4.3.2.1. Individual competence

The research uncovered a list of competencies which the participants identified as important qualities for talent in the hospitality industry, and these are detailed below.

Service-mindedness was considered one of the most important criteria. This is perhaps not surprising given that the hospitality industry is a service-based industry. The other reason cited for considering this criterion to be very important was that it is a quality that cannot be taught. For example, GM1 described service-mindedness as “*the ability of workers to stay friendly (working with a smile from the heart) while giving the service. This quality is a result of an employee’s natural disposition (behaviour), and the natural willingness to serve customers. People who are service-minded are attracted to customers.*” Similarly, HRM3 observed that “*customers can look through your intangible behaviour (e.g. eye contact, smile, etc.)*” and based on how employees conduct themselves they can conclude if this service is provided willingly and honestly, or not.

Sharing and team-working is also viewed as a fundamental trait required of potential talent in hotels. GM2 explained that “*we work as a team not individuals; thus we have to help each other to contribute to a great service.*” LM5 pointed-out that, “*it is important to share knowledge about the business strategy as it is impossible for one worker to contribute to business success. Business success is the responsibility of the whole team.*”

Good appearance is highlighted by most interviewees as a vital quality. For example, LM12 stressed that “*I take grooming seriously...it is important for the service industry...we have to dress cleanly and neatly. The hair, walking, speaking; these are all*

considered. We need to look professional in every aspect and at all levels... I am the housekeeping manager and I always check my co-workers for compliance on this.” GM1 also stressed that: *“in hotels what we sell is our personality you have to look good all the time. No matter how clever you are, it is of no use if you are not well presented (outfit, make-up, hygiene etc.). What I require is a great appearance in my hotel.”*

Knowledge of the industry and work: This aspect was also considered a very important quality of talent according to many participants. For example, GM5 referred talent as *“high in knowledge and skills to work in this industry and want to work in our team.... working to the best standard... and contribute to high standard between co-workers and customers”*. Similarly, GM7 stated that, *“they have to know how to work at least some certain level”*. Meanwhile, HRM6 commented that *“if they have no knowledge of the work, then it is impossible to progress and will result in job failure”*. From the findings, it appears that most participants are more focused on talent in key positions, with high knowledge of the work and industry. Talent is expected to help other workers and act as role models in the organisation as pointed out by GM6, HRM9, HRM7, etc.

Experiences gained within the hotel sector or another related field was viewed as necessary of talent (e.g. GM3, GM6, HRM3, and LM12). GM3 stated that, *“we don’t hire new graduate here, we need experienced people as they know what they are doing”*. GM6 added, *“...we don’t have much time for training, thus people with some experience are needed”*. HRM3 stated that the reason why hotels need experienced workers is that *“most of the tasks in the hotel require immediate problem solving, thus if you have no experience you may struggle to deal with that situation”*. LM12 supported that view and pointed out that, *“...we cannot gamble the reputation of our hotel through being represented by workers with no experience. In key positions within the hotel, we need people with at least 3 years’ experience in hotels”*.

Problem Solving was identified as one of the important aspects, as indicated by many participants. For example, HRM 17 stated that, *“they also need to be able to solve problems quickly and correctly, so as to greatly satisfy all parties.”* The argument was that if customers have problems, then they need immediate resolution of the problem

from the service providers. For example, LM4 noted that, *“most problems have to be sorted out immediately, our staff members have to act quickly to make all the parties happy”*.

Understanding the human needs: It is anticipated that talent would be able to understand the expectation of customers and co-workers. HRM9 stated that, *“they must understand and know how to satisfy the needs of customers and employees...to serve them right”*. The quality of ‘understanding human needs’ was also identified as an important quality of talent. Thus, for example, HRM4 indicated that *“understanding the needs of customers is the basic quality of talent in our hotel...without it, the objective of the hotel which is to provide quality service cannot be met”*. Thus, the knowledge of human needs is important for the hospitality industry because this industry needs to create great relations and satisfaction to both customer and team-workers.

Computer knowledge and skills: Not surprising, many participants (e.g. GM1, GM3, and HRM3) referred to computer knowledge & skills to be one of the necessary qualities of talent. The main reason of this consideration is that hotel businesses are now operating online services and one tool that is used to link the world is the computer (GM1). GM3 supported this view: *“some of the hotel’s work such as the customer’s databases, customer bookings, & advertising needs at least basic computer skills.”* HRM3 pinpointed that *“it is impossible to be called talent if you have no working knowledge of computers”*. Thus, we noted that computer knowledge and skills is one of the important qualities, and talent should hold this skill as one of the vital skills in the hotel business.

Public relation knowledge and skills was also considered as an important quality by some hotels. This is because good relations between hotels and other organisations (e.g. local community, schools, media, and police stations) make hotel run smoother. Thus, talent in hotel should be able to deal cordially with these organisations. For example, LM9 indicated, *“our hotel needs someone who can create a good relation to the local community. This is because the local community is like our partners — if there are any problems we can call them for help.”* The view was also supported by LM11 who noted:

“we need to be part of society, and we as the organisation’s representative have to demonstrate to them that we are their partners...for example, we need to engage schools through community activities with children. Our workers have to be able to create something like this.”

Open-mindedness was also one of the qualities of talent which was widely regarded as vital by most participants. HRM4 noted that, *“irrespective of an individual’s abilities, they have to adapt to the hotel style...some talented workers think that they are too good and then close their minds. These kinds of people will not fit into our system.”* GM2 compared individuals who close their minds to a “full-glass” and indicated that, *“we are interested in people who are like a half-full-glass so that we can fill them, and for that to happen they have to be open-glasses.”* Thus, open-mindedness is the quality of individuals who are ready to learn and adapt as necessary.

Positive attitude is a necessary attribute in this work environment, and it refers to having a positive personality — to the job, to the organisation, and to other people. GM5 explained that, *“a positive attitude about themselves, about the people around them, to problems, and to our organisation should be the overriding quality required from individuals”*. HRM3 pointed that, *“they have to think positively about themselves, so that they can think positively about their job and people around them.”*

Patience and respectfulness: This quality was also considered to be vital aspects of talent by participants. For example, HRM12 noted that the *“ability to stay calm under customer demands, and to be also respectful to customers and co-workers are essential basic emotions for hotel workers.”* Similar observations were made by LM5, who said that, *“sometimes the customers are not reasonable but for us as the service provider, we cannot get angry. Our main duty is to just try and solve their problems; being able to explain the problem nicely, and calm them.”* The requirement for this quality does not only apply customers but also to co-workers, and as LM8 explained, *“we are not only patient and respectful to the customers, but we also have to do so among co-workers; this ensures that work can be done smoothly.”*

Communication skills, these include both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Not surprisingly, all of the interviewees focused on talented worker's ability to communicate. LM2 stated that the ability to speak a foreign language is very important for the front office employees: *"we expect our Front Office employees to speak Chinese, but it is not crucial as yet. Chinese people prefer to visit the hotel with their tour guides...but Russians are different in that they are independent. They like to come with their family or come alone. That's why we need employees who can speak Russian so that they offer support... the employees have to deal with or solve problems immediately. In addition, if they cannot solve the problem immediately, they still need to explain this to the customer in an empathising manner. For other non-front office positions, we need just the ability to hold a basic conversation."* The ability to communicate is not limited to only communicating with customers but also co-workers. HRM3 explained that *"communication skill means being able to transfer information to others effectively, both customers and co-workers. The information needs to be correct, fast and successful."*

Management knowledge and skills was also considered as one of the most important qualities by participating hotels (e.g. GM2, GM5, and HRM1). HRM1 stated: *"how can you be called talent if you don't know management? For managerial positions (especially), we require overall management experience and more especially in human resource management...you cannot work well by your own, thus you have to know and understand how people behave, and more importantly how to manage them."* Therefore, it appears that management knowledge and skills are useful in order to satisfy customer relationships, and the influence of key workers (talent) in this task is important. *"They have to know how to manage and motivate co-workers to give their best service to customers"* (GM5) and *"approach co-workers at the right time and with the right approach to motivate them"* (GM2). Thus, the quality of talent in managing and motivating other co-workers is noted as highly critical. Part of the reason for emphasising this quality is that management knowledge and skills can be a link to other resources; for example, other resources need manpower to drive them. Thus, good leadership ensures that resources are effectively utilised.

Also, talent can be used to motivate co-workers and/or subordinates, and act as a role model. The argument was that increased co-worker satisfaction can create an appropriate environment which leads to increased employee satisfaction. This in-turn leads to increased performance. HRM18 indicated that, *“talented workers work well with others, and they understand others more... they listen and try to offer the best to their co-workers.”* GM5 also supported that view, stating that, *“the leadership ability of talented workers can also lead to good relationships between the supervisor and subordinates, and among subordinate themselves.”* HRM18 concluded that, *“when all workers are satisfied with how they are managed and their workplace environments; then they are more willing to work well and put a good job performance.”*

4.3.2.2. Commitment to work, to the hotel organisation, and to the industry

In addition to competence, another characteristic that the participants identified as another important quality of talent was commitment. Three aspects of commitment were identified through interviews, and these are detailed below.

Commitment to work: One of the most cited types of commitment which was identified during this research was commitment to work. This entailed *“having to like their job.”* LM10 said that, *“our job is sometimes very stressful because of dealing with some ‘unreasonable’ customers (sometimes); if you don’t like this job you may get fed-up very quickly.”* LM6 concurred by noting that, *“it is very hard work here, you have to deal with not only customers but other job is related stresses. Furthermore, you have to deal with other departments and you have to make sure that everything is done properly.”* The willingness to improve in your job and the desire to grow in that job was also identified as an indication of commitment to the job. This view is supported by GM3 who indicated that, *“if someone wants to grow in their work then they have to try hard to improve themselves (constant job development).”*

Commitment (loyalty) to the organisation: In addition to commitment to work, commitment to co-workers and loyalty the organisation were also viewed as important qualities. LM7 stated that, *“it is not easy to travel to work in our hotel, so if you don’t*

commit to work with us there are plenty of other choices...thus it is important that someone likes their environment... LM1 noted that, “*we stay like a family here. New recruits (from within or from outside) have to accept and adapt their style to match to us.*” Similarly, GM4 concluded that, “*good workers who trust and commit to work for this particular organisation have to try to adapt their knowledge & experiences to fit and work well. I trust that if they fully commit to the cause of the organisation then they can be better workers.*” He also argued that talent is “*somebody who wants to grow in their career in the hotel industry... is hard working, etc. They have to be willing to work shifts, and to deal with many types of demanding customers... I started my career as a steward 30 years ago, and I am now the general manager... I consider myself as talent [laugh] I love the job and am passionate to learn and share my experiences with my colleagues... thus talented workers have to understand the nature of work which is the first aspect and open their mind to be part of this environment... for example, good appearance (hair, shoes, all outfits, etc), how they walk, speak.*”

Commitment to the industry: Closely linked to and related to commitment to the organisation is the commitment to the industry. This was also identified as relevant by many participating hotels. Thus GM4 pointed that, “*what you have to accept is that this industry has highly demanding customers, and long unsocial working hours...if you cannot accept these conditions then probably working in a hotel may not be suitable for you.*” GM3 also pointed out that, “*workers in hotels should be able to do shift work because hotels operate 7days/24-hours services; and thus potential workers have to understand and accept this basic condition.*” Thus, it was noted from the interview that understanding the nature of work and commitment to the industry are important if one is to succeed within this industry.

Added together these three commitments are very important because irrespective of one's level of competence, without commitment it is almost meaningless. Without commitment, most workers would quickly leave the organisation. The danger is that potentially ‘talented’ workers can be over-looked due to fears that they might lack commitment. This is mainly due to the nature of the industry. In fact this was confirmed

by HRM13 who indicated that, *“I am afraid of hiring someone with the best knowledge and skills in my hotel as we will never know when they are going to leave us.”*

4.3.2.3. Contributing to the organisation success: contribution to customers and motivation of co-workers

The final component on this equation was contribution. The participants ranked contribution of best performance highly especially contribution to customers. This is because talented workers generally have a high working ability. For example, HRM3 indicated that, *“talents are very important to us. They can help us by using their knowledge to do a great job”*. Furthermore, GM1 pointed that better performance from talented workers is because *“they know what they are doing and can use their experiences, creativeness, and innovativeness in to their work. That is the reason why they can perform better than others”*. HRM10 concluded that, *“the importance of talented workers is that they can contribute effectively....”*

The participants differentiated between two sets of contributions, the results which are presented below.

Contribution to the customers: This aspect of contribution (main contribution) was highly valued by all participating hotels. The reason given for example by HRM1 is that, *“our main duty in the hotel is to serve and satisfy the customers, thus main responsibility of talent should undoubtedly be to greatly satisfy the customers.”* Similarly HRM18 argued, *“...we have to keep our standard, talent here needs to know that the customer is king, and therefore have to do their best to make them happy — otherwise our brand will be tarnished and this might destroy the viability of the business.”* The view was also supported by GM1 who noted that, *“guests come here expecting a lot for what they have paid for, and therefore our duty is to make this their best holiday”*.

Thus, focusing on workers with this quality can help increase customer's satisfaction. This view was succinctly summed-up by HRM3 who stated that, *“the benefit of having managerial talent in our hotel is that they understand human needs better than the*

ordinary workers and they can help satisfy these effectively". In addition, GM6 supported this view and stated that, *"talented workers can use their talent to solve customer's problems in appropriate ways with their special skills; thus satisfying customer needs. As a result all parties will be happy."* The satisfaction or happiness of customers can lead to good feedback and repeat customer as indicated by (for example) GM1, HRM11, and HRM15.

Motivation of co-workers: Besides contributing great performance towards customer's satisfaction, participants also indicated that they expected their talent to motivate co-workers and subordinates (e.g. GM5, GM2). For example, GM5 pointed that *"talent is our drivers, they have to have an ability to contribute to organisational success"* and argued that these "drivers" have to know how to satisfy customers (give the best service to customers) and at the same time also know how to manage and motivate their co-workers. GM2 also supported that view by arguing: *"talent have to approach the co-workers at the right time and with the right approach to motivate them"*. Therefore, the researcher notes that in order to be talent it is very important to master the art of human management.

The view was that if talented workers' performance is high then this can influence other workers as well, or become role-models for other co-workers (e.g. GM3, GM6, HRM7, HRM9, LM7). For example, GM3 stated that, *"as the head, they can help and motivate others to be good like them"*. Similarly, LM7 stated that, *"it is important to have talented workers here in strategic positions because what they do can be the main motivation for other workers to follow; and thus this can be our standard of working or the model of best practice."*

In conclusion, we note that participants regard the combination of capability (competence), commitment and loyalty as greatly contributing to 'great contribution'. The qualities of talented workers which are identified by the participants as vital are: individual's capability; fit to the organisational needs (strategically and culturally); commitment to work; loyalty to the organisation; and contribution to work performance (organisation, colleague, and customer). The qualities are complementary to each other.

This view is aptly summed-up in the quote that follows from GM3. He pointed out that; *“all talent should firstly be service-minded. Then have a good personal appearance (e.g. neat and clean grooming); ... also, it is important to be able to do shift work as hotels operate a 24-hour service. Furthermore, they should be honest... hard working... ready to learn. ...We don’t mind people who have no experience as they can learn; however they have to have some idea what they need to do... ability to speak.”*

It appears that the qualities required of talented workers are the combination of soft skills and hard skills. However, more of soft skills (e.g. service-minded, motivation, team working) were ranked slightly higher than the hard skills (e.g. knowledge and skill, computer skill).

4.3.3. Results of the Semi-structured Interviews: Talent refers more to an acquired ability rather than purely natural ability

Based on the above discussion, the researcher concluded that within the hotels, talent is a combination of qualities and attributes as reflected in Figures 4.4 and 4.5. Even though the participants proposed various definitions and identification criteria, the responses can essentially be grouped into talent as natural ability versus talent as ‘nurture’. Based on the responses, we can conclude that talent within this industry is more an acquired ability than natural ability. This is evidenced by the fact that there are very few participants who defined talent as natural ability. By contrast, acquired abilities such as ‘knowledge and skill’ and ‘knowledge of the industry and work’ were regarded as more important.

Talent within participating hotels was defined as the ability, which can be acquired through the education system, training, or experiences. To be defined as talent among the participating hotels; knowledge and skills to work was among the most important qualities, while other aspects like leadership and influences, organisational fit, performance, motivation and commitment, willing to learn and adapt, and experience respectively are also considered to be important according to the participants. Perhaps more importantly, as HRM2 concludes: talent is *“someone who has appropriate*

knowledge, skills, experiences....but are more driven by the desire to learn ways to even be better; and more importantly they have to love their job and want to grow in it.”

The majority of participants considered talent as individuals who possess high knowledge and skills, and thus contribute to high performance in particular jobs. For example, HRM3 stated that *“talent should have above standard knowledge and skills which should match their work. Also, these should be in-line with the direction of organisation”*. This view was further supported by LM10 who stressed that *“the talented individuals should use their high knowledge and skills in order to contribute the great performance of work; which would result in greater customer’s satisfaction in (our) products/services”*. GM5 also noted that it is *“not only high knowledge and skills”* but that *“talent should also possess leadership skills so as to able to influence other workers to work like they do”*. Thus in order to be regarded as talent; individuals have to possess high technical knowledge and skills, and also managerial qualities. These ensure that they are thus able to contribute greatly to performance.

The view that talent is an acquired ability rather than natural ability is also noted from the views of GM8 who stated that the combination of qualities can be gained over time and through adopting a hands-on approach. GM8, further indicated that to become talent is not a ‘one day processes, but rather *“it needs time because they may have some sort of education that they learn in the universities and more than that they should have had some experiences. Thus in this respect they can learn from all angles”*. Talent is one who is able to deal with all these experiences well and readily apply them in new situations.

By contrast, the researcher notes that there are very few participants who defined talent with regards to natural ability; or as somebody with high knowledge and skills which are in high demand. Examples of those who did include GM7, who defined *“talent as a person who has their talent from birth”*; and observed that *“they don’t have to try hard to learn anything such as singers, superstars, etc...they perform naturally”*. The example given by GM7 as natural talent included a famous Thai singer “Bird Tongchi” and he further noted that such ‘talents’ are impossible to imitate.

The next section details the results of the semi-structured interviews.

4.3.4. Results of the Semi-structured Interviews: Talent as more crucial in managerial/key positions rather than all workers' roles

The other theme that emerged during the interviews was whether everyone within the organisation can be classified as talent or not? Or who is talent? Also, the question was which roles/positions are the most crucial? What is the top priority for the organisation, and how talent can support this goal or 'top priority'?

The majority of participating hotels identified key positions (in any departments) as the most crucial roles in their organisations, and therefore as the ones requiring talent. These key positions ranged from senior workers, supervisors, line managers up-to CEO. This is dependent of the management structure of the organisation; but essentially refers to 'all level of managerial positions'. Thus, for example, GM1 said, *"all our employees are important but key roles like supervisors have to drive their team to work well"*. GM4 also supported that view by stating that, *"the supervisor, or team leader in the section is the key driver, they take the organisational policy and bring into practice...if this goes successfully then we will be the most successful hotels"*.

According to a few other participants, the most crucial role is that held by the frontline employees who are directly interfacing with the customers. The reason advanced for choosing this position was that if the providers (hotels) fail to meet the customer expectations, then this could lead to a direct negative feedback about the hotel. For example, GM1 expressed that *"the key positions are not the only crucial roles the hotel but also all our front-line employees. We cannot let them service employee if they are not ready, so we have to make sure that we get the right person. This provides the most satisfaction to the customers... We cannot gamble the reputation of the hotel neither do we need any bad feedback."* Similarly, LM7 gave an example of 'sports trainer' in his

department that, *“they are the most important in our team, without them provision of the best service is not feasible”*.

Motivating co-workers to contribute good performance is also another trait that makes talent important according to the participants. Talent can influence co-workers through their own performances. Their view was that if talented workers' performance is high then this can influence other workers as well, or become role-models for other co-workers. For example, GM3 stated that, *“as the head, they can help and motivate others to be good like them”*. Similarly, LM7 stated that, *“it is important to have talented workers here in strategic positions because what they do can be the main motivation for other workers to follow; and thus this can be our standard of working or the model of best practice”*.

In addition to the above findings, it can be noted from Figure 4.4 above that both 'knowledge and skills' and 'leadership and influence' are among the top ranking phrases used to define talent by the participating hotels. Furthermore, 'knowledge of industry', 'communication skills', and 'management knowledge and skills' were identified as important qualities by the participants. Clearly, one of the key attributes which was identified by participants as can constituting talent was 'Leadership & Influence'. Therefore, the conclusion that can be drawn is that talent among the participating hotel refers more to managerial talent rather than everyone in the organisation (for example, LM3 and GM5).

Thus, for example, LM3 pointed-out that, *“in addition to great performance, talented workers have to act as role models and team leaders. They have to be able to show that they can work well and be able to help their subordinates work to the required standard in the appropriate way”*. GM5 added that when organisations want to reach the international standard, then they have to have enough talented individuals in order to remain competitive. He argued: *“we cannot go without direction as the hotel market is becoming fiercer and fiercer from global market competition. We are competing not only with local hotels but also with many investors globally. Thus we have to have drivers (talent) who can think globally to help us to fight in the market.”* Meanwhile,

HRM1 argued: *“how can you be called talent if you don’t know management. For managerial positions especially, we require overall management experience and more especially in human resource management...you cannot work well by your own, thus you have to know and understand how people behaviour, and more importantly how to manage them.”*

Many of the participants supported the view that talent refers more to managerial talent rather than all the workers’ roles (both expressly and implicitly). The combination of these attributes and qualities were identified as signifying talent. Talents were viewed as individuals who act as role models in order to motivate subordinates. For example, HRM12 was of the opinion that *“talent have to work well, reaching a good standard”* and also *“good at managing people”*. Also, LM12 asserted that *“talents are individuals who are ready to give service to our customers. As we don’t have time to provide the basic training, these people should have some experience. The person whom our hotel is looking for is someone who has great motivation to work; and has at least 1 year experience in a similar position... moreover, they need to fit our hotel style... we need great people to contribute great service.”* The notion that “talent” has to be good at managing people is in-line with ideas raised by Michaels et al (2001) when he discussed managerial talent.

However, some participants defined talented workers as individuals who had appropriate skills to work, along with the commitment to learn and grow in the organisation. For these participants, talents referred to all employees. HRM2 noted that *“talent is someone who has appropriate knowledge, skills, experiences....but are driven by the desire to learn ways to even be better; and more importantly they have to love their job and want to grow in it”*.

In conclusion, it is noted that within the context of the hospitality industry (especially in hotels) talent referred to high potential/potential workers who work in key positions. This is because these positions can assist, coach and act as role models for their subordinates to work well to meet the hotel’s goals. Also, we note that according to the participating hotels the most crucial roles, needing talent are the key positions in wide

range managerial positions (from senior worker to the CEO). However, the middle level (line managers) and lower level (supervisors, captains) management were considered more important by most participating hotels. Regarding the top priority to hotels, it is evident that staying competitive in the market is the most important vision of most organisations. We conclude from the findings that talented workers are the main support to help the hotels to attain that vision, and that talent is one of the most crucial resources in participating hotels. Interestingly, hotels are likely to grow their own talents; this ensures that they have talent who understand the organisation values and ethos (learns and grows). This point will be explored in detail in the section that addresses ‘managing talent’ (Section 4.4). About the likely threat of AEC, the participants believed that having ‘home grown talent’ would drive and assist them to remain competitive.

4.3.5. Results of the Semi-structured Interviews: Talent is more context dependent rather than transferable

In the previous section, we concluded that talent, within the context of the Thai hospitality industry, is more concerned with people in ‘key positions’ compared to other positions. However, we have also seen that the participants see a combination of attributes and qualities as constituting talent. Therefore, this indicates that talent in this context essentially refers to the ‘position’ as well as the characteristics. In addition to the above, the ability to transfer skills across work environments and apply them within the context of the new environment is crucial.

As shown in Figures 4.4 and 4.5, ‘knowledge of the industry and work’, ‘knowledge and skill’, and ‘organisational fit’ are qualities/attributes that rank highly among the participating hotels. The participating hotels noted that to achieve organisational fit then the ‘knowledge and skills’ that are acquired in other industries (or other similar organisations) have to be transferred across and applied within the context of this new organisation. However, the idea of context dependency (compliance with the organisation’s conditions such as appropriate & adequate training program) was regarded as slightly more important than the transferability.

Another idea or notion of talent is to be able to transfer knowledge and skills whether soft skills or hard skills from previous experiences, education, or previous training to a new organisation. For example, GM1 noted that *“talented individuals can bring their knowledge and skills and use them to contribute great contribution to our organisation.”* While, knowledge and skills are transferable, other aspects like the commitment to the organisation, commitment to work, and commitment to the industry are seen to be hardly transferable to other sectors. For example, GM1 indicated that *“whoever comes to our hotel has to be trained to fit with our hotel style.”* Furthermore, LM9 stated *“we try to create training opportunities for talent...this allows them to adapt their past experience and influence others to contribute their best. We hope this ensures that talent stays for long term with us.”*

Therefore, while the past background knowledge and skills, and previous work successes are vital these need to be supported by an appropriate and adequate management in the new context (this should ensure fit in the new context style). It is noted by HRM18 that *“to be talent, first of all you need to have knowledge and skills, but that there also have to be appropriate management, adequate training, good relationships, etc.”* Thus, we can conclude while transferability and context dependency are complimentary qualities, within the Thai hospitality industry talent is more context dependent skills than transferable skills sets.

4.3.6. Results from the Review and Analysis of Documentation: Definition and Quality of Talent knowledge and skills – soft and hard skills

Various documents were collected, reviewed and content analysed to support the data collected via the semi-structured interviews. The researcher aimed to answer the questions:

- What kind of people do hotels need currently?
- Are there any specific reasons for these current needs?
- What specific criteria or skills do the hotels look for from workers?
- What positions and or roles are regarded as most important?

Through reviewing and analyzing the contents of the available documentation, the researcher was able to identify and confirm that knowledge, skills, behavior, and working style were some of the requirements for talent within participating hotels. Talent workers who met these requirements had an important role of helping the individual hotels to achieve the business strategy. These requirements were found in documentation such as the 'job specification' (JS), 'job description' (JD), 'human resource guide' (HRG), 'person specification' (PS) 'job advertisement' (JA), 'interview forms' (IF), 'application forms' (AF), 'evaluation forms' (EF), etc. For example, the researcher had the opportunity to look at the human planning guide (D1H3); especially in the JD section (this describes the position and its responsibilities) and PS (the criteria of person e.g. education qualification, years of experiences, foreign language skills, management skills, attitude, knowledge of work, solving skills). The human planning guide (D1H3) clearly laid-out the requirements/qualities/competencies that the participant needed from new recruits; and the instrument (s) that were to be used to measure attainment of these competencies. This indicated that the participants carried-out proper planning before undertaking recruitment of workers. It also indicated that they had a clear mind of who they needed to assist the organisation to reach its goals.

This view was supported in the document D1H4 (Annual Report, p.11) which recorded that *"there is a lot of competitiveness and external constraints in hotel business....therefore the hotel needs adequate talent in key positions who fit the organisation's goal as they are the heart of organisation to sustain competitive."* Therefore, to remain competitive hotels need talent to drive the organisation into reaching their goal. It is not surprisingly that talent in key positions is required to possess soft-skills/ or personal behaviour skills (such as service mindedness and customer care); as well as hard knowledge and skills like knowledge of the work and industry. .

For example, in the document D2H17 (Skills Guide of the restaurant) the criteria and requirements for the job role are as listed below. The candidate workers were required to sign it as an indication that they understood the job requirements; and the requirements are:

- 1) Welcome and create ambience
- 2) Contribute to management of the hotel (e.g. know the ratio of department, capable of managing the small restaurant)
- 3) Organise, manage and lead
- 4) Guarantee safety (know the hygiene regulation for the receipt of goods).
- 5) Commitment to work (e.g. capable of making suggestions for improvements in the service given to the customers)

Soft skills like service mindedness/ customer care, sharing and team working, positive attitude, open-mindedness are also important to the participating hotels. For example, D2H23 (JD, p.1) stated that *“first impression means everything. Your friendly and outgoing nature, as well as your flair for detail and outside-the-box thinking, will guarantee every client you personally interact with will remember their experience you helped create. ...Co-workers appreciate the positive energy you bring to the team, as well as your inherent ability to have fun while maintaining a high degree of professionalism. Your smile and attitude are infectious.”*

This was also evident from the evaluation form D3H17, Evaluation for Expert Form (p.1) (a form that is used to evaluate the expertise of workers in specific work areas), in which the criteria for identifying internal workers as ‘experts’ talent’ were defined as:

- 1) Knowledge and technical capacity
- 2) General results of performance, accuracy and steadiness
- 3) Creativity and development of work
- 4) Availability, capacity to work and efficiency
- 5) Human relationships, aptitude to judge and take charge of responsibility
- 6) Aptitude to assume work when the superior is not there
- 7) Availability and efficiency to answer demands
- 8) Perception of own role and relation with staff.

Meanwhile, the D2H1 (JD) listed the following requirements for the Guest Services Agent: Bachelor’s degree (any field); 3-5 years minimum experience in a similar position preferably within the hospitality business; proficiency in English and computer literacy; good health, maturity and pleasant personality and neat appearance; able to

cope with pressure. This is in the same line with D4H17 (Evaluation of Interviews Form), it presented the evaluation rating 0 to 3 for the criteria of evaluating the best worker to fill the positions. It was observed that the criteria for choosing the best worker included: good appearance; verbal skills and non-verbal skills (e.g. very cooperative); technical knowledge; professional experience; management ability (e.g. definite ability to organise, lead motivate, guide); motivation (e.g. dynamic and ambitious); stability (e.g. some planned changes with salary increases); and foreign language (e.g. fluent)

Therefore, in observing available documents relating to the definition of talent among participating hotels, it is found that, both soft skills and hard skills are needed in choosing the best talent. Thus, knowledge, skills, behavior (commitment), working style (e.g. ability to lead), contribution, and work experiences are all necessary traits if one is to be termed 'talent'.

4.3.7. Results from the Observation – Definition and Quality of talent: knowledge and skills – soft and hard skills

The researcher also used direct non-participant observations in an attempt to confirm the findings from the semi-structured interviews and documentation reviews. This was in order to confirm whether the findings on the quality of talent from semi-structured interviews are in-line with what we can observe in practice.

It is observed that most talents (key actors) are knowledgeable about their duties, and this is not surprising since they have to lead and assist the team. One case which was observed was the phone call received by GM6 during the interview. The caller (the manager of the food and beverage department) was seeking advice from GM6 on how to prepare for an event involving 300 customers; and during this conversation GM6 explained step by step what should be done; and also offered to assist the manager later.

It is not only the knowledge of work but participating hotels also required an ability (or the skill) to speak at least one foreign language (mainly English). This was because most participating hotels were located in tourist areas; and the majority of these tourists spoke foreign languages and thus these workers need be able to communicate with them. As

above, knowledge and skill of speaking other languages might be needed depending on the customer base line. For example, the 80 per cent of customers in H1, H2 and H4 were Russian, and thus there was a preference for people who were able to use Russian. Meanwhile, the main customers of H9 and H10 are Chinese; and thus talent here needs to be able to speak Chinese.

Most of the problems that arise within the hotel settings are mostly the immediate issues, thus have to be promptly addressed. As a result, talent within the hotel has to be able to deal with the issues promptly. This was witnessed by the researcher in some hotels (e.g. H2, H17, H19, H23). For example, in hotel H2 there was an issue regarding a waiter who spilt the drink on the customer and the customer did not want to negotiate with the staff. While the case could have escalated, it was resolved through the supervisor taking prompt action and negotiating with the customer (communication skills) and offering a free meal.

The appearance of the participants and other workers was another issue which the researcher paid attention to after it had been raised during the initial interviews. In particular the researcher observed that all of the participants in managerial positions were well-groomed and communicated very well (both verbally and non-verbally). This was especially evident in the front line department such as Food and Beverages (F&B), Front Office, and Housekeeping.

As already uncovered during interviews; managerial talent has to influence and motivate subordinates. This was also observed during the fieldwork; and in particular was evident in hotels H1, H2, H15, H26, and H29 where the team key actors did not let subordinates work alone. In these hotels the researcher noted how the teams worked together and how the management team also worked with the team. From the researcher experiences, what was observed was a classic case of the influence of key actors on other team members. The senior managers (or supervisors) need to lead the team; they are not acting as the commander rather they are the model or the helper of the subordinates.

4.3.8. Summary of section 4.3

This section aimed to address the first and second research question and its sub-components. Firstly, it established whether the participating hotels (whether Thai Individual, Thai Chains or International Chains branded hotels) understood how the concept of talent applies within the hotel sector. This was confirmed by their ability to clearly specify the importance of talent within the hospital industry, and also through the participants defining and identifying criteria/qualities used to identifying talent.

Table 4.3 provides a summary of the themes that emerged in the definition of talent, and it indicates how these themes were evidenced. Some of the themes were evident from all the sources, that is, semi-structured interviews, documentation and direct observations; while others were only evident from the semi-structured interviews.

Categories and Themes	Semi-structured Interviews	Documentation	Observation
Capability (Competence)			
Service Mindedness/Customer care	✓	✓	✓
Sharing and team-working	✓	✓	n/a
Good appearance	✓	✓	✓
Public relations skill	✓	n/a	n/a
Open-mindedness	✓	✓	n/a
Positive attitude	✓	✓	n/a
Patience and respectfulness	✓	✓	n/a
Capability (Competence)			
Knowledge of the industry and work	✓	✓	n/a
Communication skills	✓	✓	n/a
Management knowledge and skills	✓	✓	n/a
Experiences	✓	✓	n/a
Problem Solving	✓	✓	✓
Understanding the human needs	✓	✓	✓
Computer Knowledge and skills	✓	✓	✓
Loyalty/Commitment			
Commitment to work	✓	✓	n/a
Loyalty to organisation	✓	✓	n/a
Commitment to industry	✓	✓	n/a
Contribution			
Contribution to the customers (e.g. Shift working, flexibility)	✓	✓	✓
Motivation of co-workers	✓	✓	✓

Table 4.3: Triangulation of Quality of Talent

From this summary, we conclude that most of the participants had good background knowledge about the term talent, and this confirms that the term talent can be applied in the hospitality industry. This is evident from the various definitions of talent (given) and from the justifications (of why this term can be applied in hospitality industry and especially in hotels). The ability to easily define and identify talent as determined by the phrases/terms defining talent and qualities of talent (coupled with the importance) as presented in Table 4.3 (and, also Figure 4.4 & 4.5) indicate a clear understanding of talent within this domain (across the management level and irrespective of the hotel ownership).

The findings from this section indicated that the term talent (and the qualities thereof) is widely known and used. The question therefore was what does it mean practically? How are the definitions translated into action, especially in terms of managing talent and

minimising the problems associated with talent? For this research, the starting point was finding-out what problems the participants face and how those will be mirrored (or not mirrored) in how talent is managed? My proposition is that if organisations are able to define and identify talent, this in-turn helps them in their endeavour to manage and retain that talent. Therefore, in the next section we will examine how the participants manage talent.

4.4. Second Research Question: Talent Retention in Hospitality Industry (Hotels)

This section is based on the second research question; *“how do participating hotels manage talent?”* In an attempt to answer this question; we will initially consider the importance of talent, then discuss the problems and challenges of managing talent, and finally present findings on how talent is managed in the face of these challenges (and, also how the strategies for managing talent are linked to the definitions). The question is: *“Is there a relationship between the definition and strategies for managing talent?”*

There was a broad consensus among most of the participants that the concept of talent needs to be incorporated within the hospitality industry. This is partly because the conceptualisation and operationalisation of talent within this field would enable hotels to usefully classify their workers and thus develop focussed strategies for meeting their needs and keep them productive (e.g. GM1, HRM 12, and GM8). Also, among some of the reasons given for advocating the use of the term talent was that hotels need drivers to be successful. Most of the participating hotels were of the view that *“sustaining competitiveness”* is the top-most priority; and considered having ‘more talented workers in the organisation’ as a sure way of achieving this objective. For example, HRM12 noted that *“talent has to work well, attaining a very good standard and also being good at managing people...here in our hotels we need those drivers to drive our hotel to meet its goals and beat competition from rival hotels.”* Similarly, GM8 observed that there was high competition among hotels (from both the domestic and international market) but also that acquiring a talented workforce would help starve-off competition. GM8

noted that *“there are many competitors around us, the hotel sector market is big (more demand than supply); we need to hire the best people to help us to stay competitive.”*

The specialised nature of job roles in the hospitality industry (and hotel sector in particular) was another reason cited as motivating the need for talent in this area. GM5 stated that *“the hotel job is not easy, there are various related tasks: dealing with different types of customers, dealing with customers with different and (at times) difficult needs, managing difficult relations within and between departments.”* Furthermore, GM1 commented: *“all the needs of customers have to be met as soon as possible and those dealing with these tasks (or situations) have to be multi-skilled.”*

Furthermore, motivating co-workers to contribute good performance was also another trait that makes talent important according to participating hotels. Their view was that if the performance of talented workers is high then this will influence other workers as well (that is, they become role-models for co-workers). For talent in managerial positions, increasing co-workers and/or subordinate satisfaction was also viewed as an important role. It was argued that this can create an appropriate environment which leads to increased performance.

From the foregoing discussion (and the detailed presentation in Section 4.3), the author concludes that talent was viewed as one of the most important resources among participating hotels because they can assist the hotel to contribute to the best performance, motivate others to contribute to good performance, increase co-workers' satisfaction, and also increase customer's satisfaction. Thus, all these mentioned qualities of talented workers will lead to organisational success and ensure the organisation's sustained competitiveness.

In the next section, we will present the challenges of managing talent that were identified by the participating hotels. These challenges are presented within the context of the current economic situation.

4.4.1. Introduction: Challenges of managing talent in the Hospitality Industry: Why talent retention is important to hotels?

There is a general consensus that talent is now more mobile, and that the competition for talent between employers is shifting from being at the national level to being at regional and global levels. As a result, transfer learning becomes increasingly important (McDonnell et al, 2010, p. 152). In this section, results/finding regarding some of the challenges in managing talented workers as uncovered through the fieldwork interviews. Since the participants to the interview were employers of ‘talent’, therefore these challenges and problems are being presented from the point of view of the organisation. The findings on the challenges and problems are based on the semi-structured interviews, which were supplemented by a review and analysis of selected documentation and from the non-participant observations.

4.4.2. Results from the Semi-structured Interviews – Challenges of managing talent

Figure 4.6 presents a summary of the widely cited problems and challenges that the participants identified as having an impact on the recruitment, selection and retention of talent. These have been arranged according to importance — according to how frequently each challenge or problem was identified by the participants.

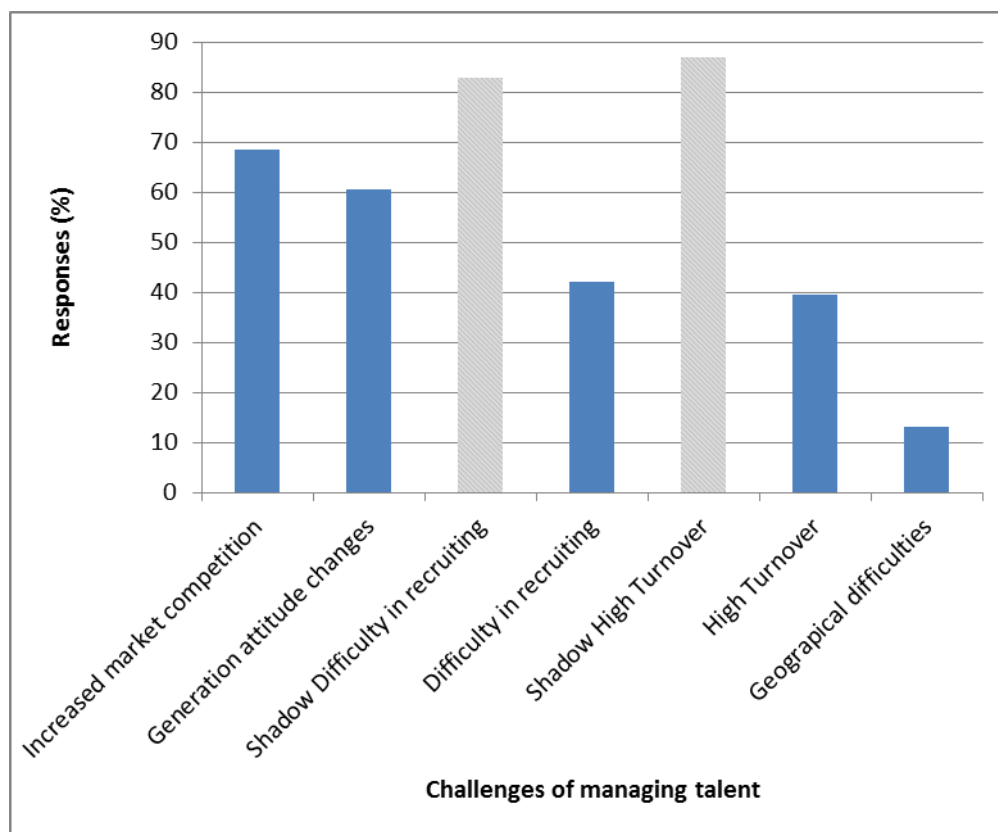


Figure 4.6: Challenges Related to Managing Talents

Based on Figure 4.6, it is noted that the participants view ‘high turnover’ and ‘difficulties in recruitment’ as the most challenging aspects of managing talent in the hospitality industry. While on the surface these do not appear to be very high on the graph, we note that most of the participants, instead of mentioning these factors directly, chose to focus on their manifestation through other factors – specifically ‘increased market competition’, ‘general attitudes change’, and ‘geographical difficulties’. That is, most of the participants chose to focus on ‘increased market competition’, ‘general attitudes change’, and ‘geographical difficulties’. This is because these factors directly affect turnover and recruitment difficulties; and is viewed as functions/drivers of turnover and recruitment difficulties.

Therefore, in creating the ‘shadow’ proportions we have used the following formula:

- **Shadow Difficulty in Recruiting** = proportion of (‘increased market competition’ + ‘geographical difficulties’ + ‘Generation attitude changes’) + ‘Difficulty in recruiting’

- **Shadow High Turnover** = proportion of ('increased market competition' + 'geographical difficulties' + 'Generation attitude changes') + 'High Turnover'

It has to be noted that some of the factors such as 'increased market competition' have been used more than once because the challenges are interlinked and interconnected, and therefore tend to influence more than one factor.

One criticism that might be labelled against the methodology that we have adopted is that the apportioning is arbitrary, and possibly that some factors should have more influence on some 'challenges' than others. The last point could be addressed through applying 'weighted proportions' (weighted apportioning). However, we have opted for the simpler and more practical approach, and therefore based the 'shadow proportions' on the 'average rule'.

4.4.2.1. Increased labour market competition leads to difficulties in recruiting and retaining talent

One of the main challenges cited by most participating hotels was rapid increase in the number of hotels in Thailand, and consequently the increased competition for labour. The crisis in the labour market for hotel sector workers is due to the increase in the number of hotels, resorts, and guesthouses. HRM11 noted, *"...it is very difficult to find people who want to work in hotels these days... as you can see those 4 hotels around us opened in the last few months... and these new hotels offer more money to persuade workers to work for them."* The main complaint amongst most hotels was that the hotel labour market is 'tighter' — that is, more demand than supply. For example, GM1 said that, *"we have to lower our expectations because there are not many candidates to select from...we want people with high standards but at times we have to accept people who are at about 70 per cent of our expectations."* In addition, the HRM5 indicated that *"the number of hotels is increasing, and consequently the mobility (of good workers) is also high among hotels. Good workers have more choices."* GM6 concluded that she has

already nurtured future talent in anticipation of increased market competition (due to opening of AEC), and the possible increased demand for ‘good workers’.

Consequently, it was noted that the (trend) increasing numbers of hotels has a direct impact on recruitment and retention of talent. The (trend) increasing number of hotels is leading to more difficulties in the recruitment and retention of talent.

4.4.2.2. The “Y” generation’s attitude and mobility is negatively affecting recruitment and retention of talent

According to Figure 4.6 the second challenge for participating hotels was that the main labour market for these hotels was the younger generation (20-35 years old). This is a challenge in that talented workers in this age group are versatile. This age group is likely to keep trying for new opportunities, and this age group is characterised as being less patient. The argument advanced by the participants is that the main attraction for this generation of workers is better pay offers, more responsibility and a better work environment. For example, HRM1 noted that *“workers nowadays are changeable if they get offered more money they will simple leave.”* Besides financial incentives, the participants also cited *“more responsibility, better priority and better development opportunities”* as the other issues which today’s talent needs. For instance, HRM15 noted that *“it is not simple money that attracts talent, they also want better job satisfaction, flexibility, training opportunities, and an appropriate work environment.”* Furthermore, today’s talent want more challenging work. This was cited by HRM12, who expressed that *“we are struggling to retain talent... as young talent keeps moving from one job to another testing their skills and knowledge....”* HRM11 noted that, *“this young talented age group know their full potential, and they move from one firm to another very easily.... we need to understand what they need and attract them in the right way.”*

In summary, we note that the talent are more likely to accept new jobs as long as it meets their criteria; and these criteria can take different forms (rather than merely financial reasons). The challenge for organisations is to understand the drivers of talent, and therefore bear that in mind when trying to develop appropriate strategies for attracting and retaining talent within the organisation.

4.4.2.3. Hotel location or accessibility negatively affects recruitment and retention of talent.

The location of the hotel was another aspect, which was highlighted by some participants as a challenge. The location makes it difficult for the hotel to retain talented workers. HRM5 pointed out that *“our hotel is far from the city and there is no public transport, and therefore employees have to travel using their own vehicles... this limits our hotel’s ability to retain the best.”* Similarly, LM9 pointed-out that the location of the hotel is one of the biggest issues in retaining talented workers: *“our hotel is located on an island and employees have to travel by boat to work. It is not easy to find people...this is our limitation to getting and retaining the best people.”*

According to the above discussion, the accessibility of the location where the hotel is situated is negatively associated with recruitment and retention. Hotels that are situated in locations that are not easily accessible face difficulties in recruiting and retaining talent.

4.4.3. Results of the Review of the Documentation – Challenges of managing talent

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, the researcher also looked for and reviewed any documentation that might support the issues raised by the participating hotels as challenges and difficulties of managing talents.

Thus, for example, the fact that the number of hotels in Thailand was increasing was also highlighted in a report written by the Bank of Thailand (Bank of Thailand, 2013) (D2-Others). This phenomenon was also identified by the researcher from the review and analysis of the hotels' guide map. The guide map (D1-Others, See Appendix 9) indicated that there were many hotels clustered around each other, and thus creating a lot of competition in the area.

Therefore, we can conclude that in these areas there is more demand than supply of talent. The increased labour market competition leads to difficulties in recruiting and retaining talent.

4.4.4. Results of the Observation – Challenges of managing talent

In addition to the semi-structured interviews and documentation, the researcher also made observations. Thus, for example, we also noticed that there were many other hotels that were located near the hotels that participated in the interviews. This supported further the argument about increased labour market competition. In addition, hotels and other similar businesses (e.g. restaurant, travel agency) require similar quality of worker, and this therefore leads to increased competition for the best workers.

In addition, while commuting to conduct the interviews on one of the sites the researcher had to rely on the boat for transportation. Therefore, she experienced first-hand the difficulty of travelling that way, and the likely challenge that 'potential' workers might have to face on a daily basis. To mitigate against the problem of transportation, most inland hotels offer free travel bus for their workers, and this helps ease the transportation problem.

Therefore, according to what we observed the challenge for the hotel in managing talent include "competition in labour market" and "accessibility difficulties." That is access to work for employee.

4.4.5. Summary of Section 4.4

Through data triangulation, it has been confirmed that there are two main aspects (market competition and generation “Y” attitudes) which are the main challenges in recruiting and retaining talent. The location of the hotel or its accessibility is also a minor challenge in some hotels (See Table 4.4 and 4.5).

Interviews	Document	Observation	Challenges
HR5, HR9, LM7, LM8, LM9		-Visit the hotel by boat in the condition of big wave (Obv-H20) -No public transport to the hotel (Obv-H12, Obv-H13, Obv-H16)	Geographical Location
Most participants	-the report indicate the increasing number of hotels in Thailand (D2-Others) -Hotel's guide map (D1-Others)	-lot of the hotels surrounded in the area	Market Competition
GM2,GM3, GM4, GM5, HRM1, HRM2, HRM3, HRM4, HRM5, HRM6, HRM7, HRM8, HRM10, HRM11, HRM12, HRM13, HRM14, HRM15, HRM16, HRM17, LM1, LM2, LM3, LM4, LM5, LM7, LM8, LM9, LM10, LM11, LM12			Talented worker's workforce generation demands and behavioural changes

Table 4.4: Summary Finding of Challenges in Managing Talent

Theme	Semi-structured interviews	Documentation	Observation
Hotel location or accessibility negatively affects recruitment and retention of talent.	✓	n/a	✓
The “Y” generation’s attitude and mobility is negatively affecting recruitment and retention of talent	✓	✓	n/a
Increased labour market competition leads to difficulties in recruiting and retaining talent	✓	✓	✓

Table 4.5: Summary Finding of Challenges from the Data Analysed Collected via the Triangulation of Methods

4.5. Third Research Question: Managing talent

4.5.1. Introduction

Managing talented workers in the current economic situation presents challenges, and the challenges are presented in Section 4.4. This section presents findings on how the organisation deals with these challenges.

This section will present findings of how participating hotels manage their talent. The strategy of managing talent (talent management) includes various activities — the first activity should be to define talented workers; and then other activities (e.g. recruitment, development, retention). This section follows-on from the previous section that presented findings on challenges and problems of managing talents; and thus focuses on the difficulties of recruiting and retaining talent. Essentially, this section will focus on how participating hotels manage talent.

In terms of question of how participating hotels manage talent, the research revealed that different approaches (such as, employer branding) were adopted by different hotels. The findings from the main data collection tools semi-structured interviews, review of

selected documentation and observations are triangulated to increase validity of the findings.

4.5.2. Results of the Semi-structured Interviews: Managing Talent

This section depicts the findings from the semi-structured interviews on how the participants deal with the challenges of managing talent. Figures 4.7 show the different approaches that participants use to manage talent.

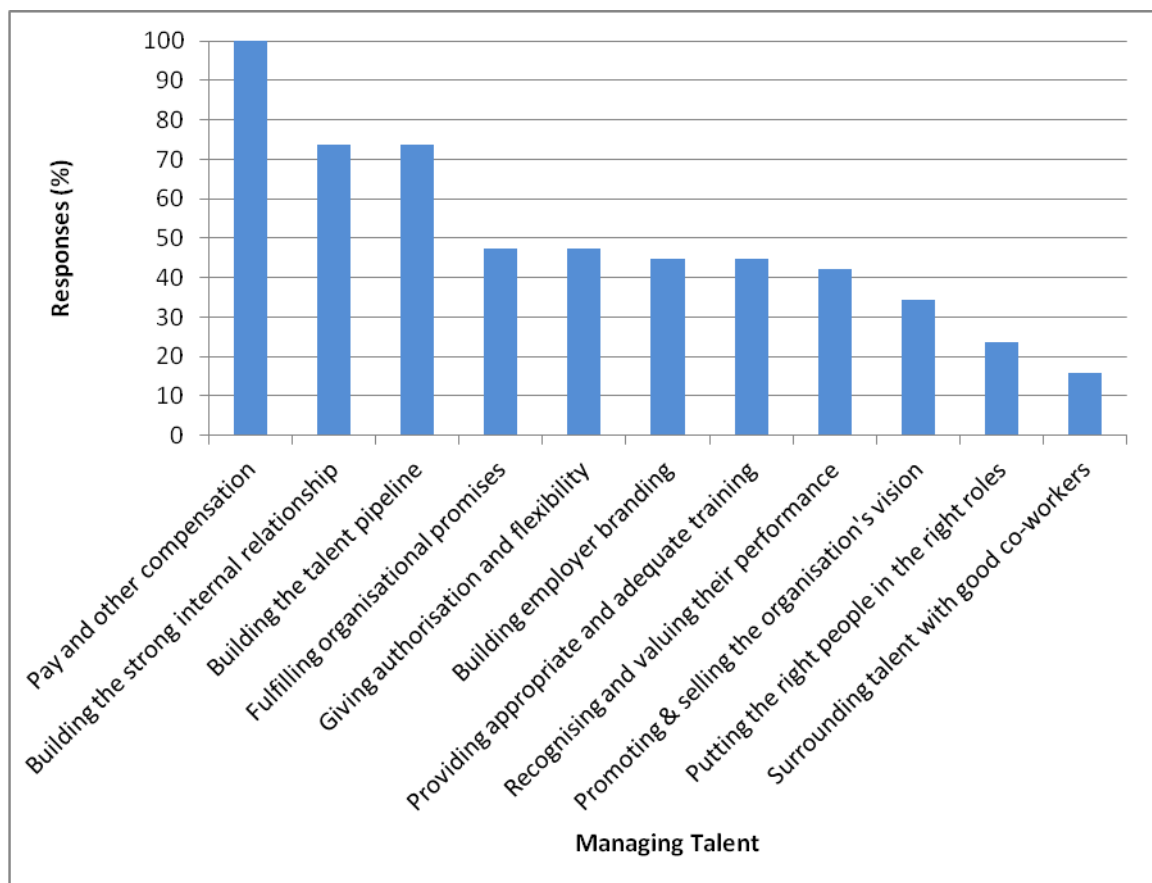


Figure 4.7: Managing Talent Approaches (MTA) within Participating Hotels

The results of the interviews revealed that different approaches (such as, providing appropriate pay and other compensation) were adopted by different hotels. Clearly, pay and compensation was a big theme among the participating hotels and all the participants adopt this approach as a framework for recruiting and retaining workers.

Furthermore, many participants also indicated that they adopt ‘intrinsic approaches’ such as ‘building strong relationships’, ‘flexibility’ and ‘branding’ as way of managing talent. These approaches are presented below.

4.5.2.1. Providing appropriate pay and other benefit /compensation

According to the participants, providing appropriate pay and other compensation (e.g. transportation, accommodation, insurance) is by far the most important (100% of participants) approach used to attract talent within participating hotels.

While basic pay levels among the participating hotels do not differ greatly, the main differences arise due to service charges and bonuses guarantees (minimum service charges and bonuses). For example, the guarantee of service charges pay is attracting talent to want to be part of the hotels employee workforce. HRM18 noted that *“we guarantee at least ₦8,000 (£150) service charge per month to attract talent to stay with us...this is not only to tell that they can get the fixed amount of income but they will learn how good our performance is in the market.”* Pay and compensation also comes in the form of bonuses as indicated by HRM15 that *“at the end of the year we always try to offer some bonus as part of the overall annual benefit in order to make the employees feel good, and thus encourage them to stay with us.”*

In addition to monetary rewards, the participating hotels also indicated that they attract talent through other compensation (and/or incentives) like free shuttle bus, accommodation, free meal and/or insurance. For example, HRM14 expressed that *“our hotel is located in an area which is harder to access, and thus we provide mini-buses to pick up our employees at designated pick-up points.”* Similarly, HRM12 added: *“we offer free bus, 4 meals, and free accommodation in order to help our workers to reduce their living cost.”* It is noted that the technique of helping the workers minimise the cost of living is part of pay. Moreover, the insurance offered by some hotels, is also used as an incentive to attract talents, but it not popular among participants as it is considered as being costly to hotel. For example, HRM15 indicated that *“we have just launched idea of*

offering insurance cover to employees. However, we cannot offer to everyone as it is costly, thus this can be offered only some position.”

In conclusion, it is noted that the offer of money and other compensation is the most widely used approach for attracting talent to stay with the organisation. However, this can be limited for some hotels as it is dependent on the organisation’s policy and budget. As HRM16 commented that *“to attract talent to be with us and stay with us we have to provide enough money and other incentives but we cannot do more than this as we have a limited budget.”* Thus, it also was noted that the wealth and rich international and chain hotels were the ones that mostly adopted monetary incentives as tools for competing against rivals and consequently were more competitive than the Thai branded hotels. This is because Thai branded hotels cannot afford to compete this way, and are therefore finding innovative ways of achieving this same end.

4.5.2.2. Building strong internal relationships / supervisory relationship

There was also consensus among the participants that building strong internal relationships among co-workers/supervisors increases talent retention. This view was mostly prevalent among general managers and hotel owners, with most general managers and owners expressing the view that all their employees are the part of their family and they treat them as family members. For example, GM1 noted that, *“we look after our staff as part of the family, this is the policy from the owner because he thinks all workers are like their son/daughter... if we look after them well it will make big difference in their work...they will become more loyal to our organisation”*. These relationships are created by different approaches like employee activities, employee birthday parties, New Year parties, etc. (e.g. GM1, GM2, GM3, HRM18, HRM15). HRM15 pinpointed that *“talent will not stay if the workers are not in good relation”*.

It is noted that the participants are focused on building strong relationships, and believe that building good relationships can help retain talent in the organisation.

4.5.2.3. Build the talent pipeline (succession planning/opportunities)

Building talent pipeline or creating career pathways for talent is also another approach that was identified by the participating hotels as a strategy that they said they adopt in their endeavour to retain talent. These succession plan needs to be more transparent; and talent within the organisation needs to be aware of these plans. This approach is considered to be important for making talent loyal to the organisation, and this was noted by HRM18 who stated that, *“the more opportunities to be part of the talent pipeline and the career pathways which the organisation offers...the more talent will stay”*. HRM1 noted that, *“any movement (promotion) of our staff needs be transparent as it might affect other workers”*. HRM3 added that the evaluation process which helps to support these promotions need to be transparent, and stated that *“we build talent inside the hotel, we choose the best from the operational level...appoint them to be senior employees, team leaders, captains, supervisors, etc...They are evaluated through key performance measures and acceptance other team members and their mentor”*. The personality of talent is likely to grow as they are given more responsibility in their workplace.

It was also uncovered that building talent pipeline allows the organisation to build a “pool” of talent, and this “pool of talent” be readily used to cover vacancies that arise within the organisation. The advantage is that this group is already schooled in the ethos of the organisation. LM9 noted that *“we build our talent and hope that they will help our hotel in the future; not only to understand the job but also to understand our organisation and keep our standard of work...we don’t have to do much on induction.”*

We conclude that the participants create an environment which allows them to build talent pipelines, and through this scheme to gain loyalty from talented workers. This also means that they have a ‘ready pool of talent’ ‘ready to use’ which can contribute the best performance to the organisation.

4.5.2.4. Fulfilling organisational promises (do what you have promised)

The issue of fulfilling organisational promises (do what you have promised) was also considered to be crucial to retaining talent according to participating hotels. This was considered as one of the most important considerations. Among some organisational promises that have to be honoured include compensation (e.g. base pay, overtime pay, bonuses, service charge, travel/meal/housing allowance, insurance, vocation, & leave), and promotion. For example, GM5 stated that *“we have to do whatever we have promised the employee that we are going to give them....the salary, pay rise, bonuses or the promotion. These cannot be abandoned”*. HRM15 added that *“the compensation, promotion, holiday are offered and written as part of the terms of employment. Employees have acknowledged that from the beginning. It is best not to disappoint them.”* Furthermore, HRM7 emphasised the importance work duty, stating that *“...the duty of work given in the job description should be followed otherwise the employee might feel over/under utilised”*; and therefore disillusioned and not committed to the work.

Thus, according to above analysis, hotels have to be honest and fulfil the promises that are offered to employees in the first place to be able to attract talent. If organisations fail to do that, it may lead talent to being disillusioned and therefore leaving the organisation.

4.5.2.5. Giving authority and flexibility in the decision making process to managers

Another notion from the participants is that in order to influence talented workers to stay, organisations have to give them authority and flexibility in the decision making process. This will naturally be based on their position in work, and according to participants this is especially true for key positions (that is, managerial talent). LM9 indicated that *“giving the authority to manage their work in the team is needed for talent because sometimes they don’t want anyone outside the team to interfere in their job...without that trust they may not be happy and thus not be loyal to the organisation”*.

There are some other participants, for example, LM2, LM3, and HRM12 who noted that talent should be given authority at work because when they feel they have authority, then they will enjoy working for the organisation. However, there is an argument that the authority and flexibility granted should be limited or commensurate with the position, for the organisation's benefit (e.g. HRM14, HRM18). HRM18 indicated that, *"there are no places that give full authority or flexibility in work; it needs to follow the organisation's rules to win the satisfaction of talent and benefit of the organisation at the same time."*

It is noted that organisations offer flexibility in decision-making and authority to their talented workers, and thus allow them to enjoy working. However, the authority should be limited to prevent abuse of authority and flexibility in decision-making; and this arrangement might be virtually impossible to offer for some positions. In this case the authority and flexibility was given to managerial talent. For example, GM2 stated that that *"we let our managers and supervisors make appropriate decisions in their work."*

4.5.2.6. Building employer branding/ employer attraction

Many participants also indicated that they use employer branding in order to attract internal and external talents. Through employer branding, organisations try to continuously remind 'potential talent' about themselves, and also make their brand-name recognisable and attractive. Through this positive publicity, 'potential talented workers' would then want to work for them. As HRM12 noted *"...we are well-known...not just due to launching one or two days of advertisements but through repeatedly branding our hotel over long periods of time... our main aim in branding is to influence customers and at the same time we can attract future employees...when we are well-known many 'potential workers' will come to us..."* This aids in attempts to recruit and retain talent.

The participants argued that they generally use three types of 'employer-branding' approaches; namely employee referral, public relation, and advertisements. These are detailed below:

Employee referral: The participants use this technique to brand themselves through current employees. GM4 commented that *“our employees are the main sources of referrals, influencing external talent to work with us, thus we do our best to make the best working environment to the current employees.”* Creating appropriate work environments can be used not only to attract external talent but also to influence internal staff (current employees) to remain with the organisation as indicated by HRM4 and HRM16.

Advertisements: The participants to the research indicated that they use various media outlets for advertising such as televisions, radios, newspapers and organisational websites. A few of the interviewees responded that they use newspapers and magazines to advertise their hotel to the public. HRM4 stated that, *“we use national newspapers to advertise our hotels by updating our activities, brands. This is done at least once per month to remind readers about us”*. Meanwhile other participants used the television to promote their hotels. Thus, for example GM1 noted that, *“television is visual mass advertisement approach, when we are on television at the right time, the audience will get more interested on our hotel... the probability of visiting our hotel increases significantly.”* However, the problem that was noted was that participants regard branding through TV advertisement to be generally a more expensive method.

The local radio is also another medium which is used to promote hotel's activities to the local society. GM4 said that, *“we use the local radio to tell people about our activities to the local area, this method is useful to make them feel they are part of our hotel”*. Furthermore, the organisational website was used by most hotels to creating a more interesting website. For example, HRM15 said that *“we use our own website to present our hotel... we are trying to develop a more attractive, easy to read, show more about hotel facilities...here the space is unlimited so we can put as much information as we want”*. Interestingly, most of the hotels used social network to communicate with outsiders because it free, easy, quick and can directly reach a large number of audiences. HRM1 said that *“we use Facebook to update our customers about the hotel and a lot of*

people come to this site... it is totally quick, no fee, no border, anyone can access it... anyone who likes our page they will get up-to-date information all the time”.

Public relation: This is another tool that participating hotels used to brand their organisation: Some participants indicated that they use this method (e.g. GM1, GM4, HRM15, LM8). LM8 stated that, “...we can stay in the business because of the support from outsiders. We have to have good relationships with all sectors such as schools, police, local communities, etc... we do this by giving some opportunities to local people to work for us... we host activity days such as cleaning the beach... organise activities for the children...building schools... and a lot more activities that are aimed at building good relationships”. The main argument was that building these relationships ensure that we have a good name, help attract future employees and making the current ones more committed to the organisation. Therefore, the employer branding technique is considered to play an important role in attracting internal and external talent. As HRM15 concluded: “if we build the strong employer good reputation, we can we can attract any talents to our organisation because talent want to work with the organisation that they can proud of.”

4.5.2.7. Providing appropriate and adequate training

Furthermore, giving adequate training is one of the approaches that the participating hotels used to retain talent. Nearly a half of the interviewees indicated that they help new and existing talented workers to adapt to work-programs in hotels through training programs. Thus, for example, LM7 indicated that they have a training course which they give to all workers. This helps them to understand their job role and to improve in it. He argued that, “we have an immediate training course for the new employees and development course for current workers”.

The participants stated that all employees have to be trained at appropriate times, and thus for example, GM4 added, “all members have to learn how we work here and adapt to our hotel’s style... the training takes place within at least a week of starting employment. However, depending on whether new employees need more training or

not, we always provide that on request... we are not relying on the employees request only, we have mentors and these mentors may require training themselves”.

From the depth of the responses provided during the interview, it was evident that the hotels consider training to be an important strategy for retaining talent. The training schedule indicated the training courses, the position, and length of time (for example, for the restaurant captain, they needed to be trained about the general rules of the restaurant, knowledge of managing the workforce, the food and beverage, etc.). Thus, training is important as whatever good the talent are, in different organisation, they have to learn and adapt to the organisation style. This also makes talent to see that the organisation regards them as important and valued resources within the organisation.

4.5.2.8. Recognising and valuing talented worker performance from the organisation (e.g. award, certificate)

Recognising and valuing the performance of talent is considered as one of the important aspects to influence talent to stay in the organisation. HRM12 commented that *“everyone wants to be important especially talents, they want to be recognised as talent and their performance should not be ignored.”* Their enthusiasm to work and contribute the best performance increases when talent knows that organisation recognise their performance (e.g. HRM10, HRM11, and LM8). The recognition within participating hotel is through awards such as giving money, travel packs, giving more responsibility, giving certificate of great performance, etc. However, not many hotels indicated this as the top priority of organisation to influence the talent to stay among participating hotels.

4.5.2.9. Promoting and selling the organisation's vision to new and current workers

In addition, to employer branding which can be viewed more in terms of ‘attracting potential employees as part of the recruitment process’, promoting and selling the organisation’s vision/plan is also essential. Some of the participating hotels considered

this approach as one of the most successful approaches of influencing talented workers to work as part of the organisation and commit to work and stay with the organisation. The argument is that if talent know that they are an important part of organisation's vision then they are likely to be more committed to their work. This starts by being able to tell the story (or plan) of why and how talent is important within that vision. HRM14 emphasised the importance of talent by stating, "*...as part of the team, talent has to understand our direction so we can go further together... if they don't know where we are how can they help us?... if they don't know how important we think they are then how can they help us to achieve our plans?...*". Sharing the story, vision and mission of organisation to talents should be given in recruitment or during the working period. As indicated by HRM9 and HRM18 that it can be set in the recruitment and selection stage (e.g. advertisement, induction, etc.). Moreover, talent can be informed about the plan of organisation any stages throughout their working period in the form of weekly, monthly or annually meetings (GM4, GM5, and HRM15). Thus, if talent know they are important to the organisation, then they will be more committed to its goals and thus remain within its ranks.

Therefore, the organisation should share their vision and mission with talent. This entails informing talent how important they are, and how they can help the organisation to achieve its vision.

4.5.2.10. Putting the right people to take the role on managing talent

Fewer participants identified "*putting the right people in the role of managing talent*" as likely to lead to increased talent retention. However, examples are found, for example GM5 stated that "*we have to have someone with the strategic view of managing people, and who knows how to manage individual talents.*" HRM12 supported this notion by stating that, "*if we have knowledgeable people to look after talent, then we can effectively retain talent*".

The "*right people to manage talent*" can be referred to "managerial talent" and these people are in positions such as line managers, HR managers, etc. This is because these

people are close to all employees. It is evident from observations made by LM5, who indicated that, *“HR managers should be responsible for managing talent as they understand human needs... they are thus set to manage our talent.”* Meanwhile, LM8 argued that *“to be effective at retaining talent, the HR department and line managers should work as a team...this ensures that they can monitor talented workers and manage them correctly”*.

4.5.2.11. Surrounding talent with good co-workers

Another interesting approach that was identified, through the interviews, as likely to contribute to talent remaining within the hotel was that ‘talented workers should be surrounded by good co-worker’. Thus, for example, HRM15 argued that, *“if talented workers work with someone whose performance levels are low, the result might be that they will get bored and probably leave”*. Similarly, LM7 and LM10 suggested that “good team working” comes through having good team workers. LM7 indicated that, *“if you are talent they might be an unnecessary expectation that you know everything, however nobody is perfect...they need a supportive teamwork so as to satisfactorily fulfil the job tasks”*. LM10 also stated that, *“talent don’t want to work on their own...so we need to supply them with good co-workers to make them not feel overburdened with responsibility”*.

4.5.2.12. Summary of Section 4.5.2

Therefore, concerning managing talent, the semi-structured interviews revealed that the participating hotels paid more attention to attracting the current talent. This indicated that they are more highly concerned with retaining their internal talent. The retention strategies provided is mostly by providing appropriate pay and other compensation/benefits. More-so, building strong internal relationships / supervisory relationships; building the talent pipeline (succession planning/opportunities); fulfilling organisational promises; giving authority and flexibility; building employer branding/ employer attraction; providing appropriate and adequate training; recognising and valuing their performance from the organisation. They paid little consideration on

promoting and selling the organisation's vision to new and current workers; putting the right people to take the role on managing talent; and surrounding talent with good co-worker.

4.5.3. Results from the Review of Selected Documentation: Managing Talent

This section presents the findings based on the review and analysis of selected documentation; and the findings in this section are used to supplement the findings from the semi-structured interviews. There are various documents which were collected (e.g. internal information board; organisation training program; annual report; slides; organisation website; photos; staff benefit and opportunities; human resource management guide/manning guide/ planning guide) (see Table 3.13). The aim of reviewing the documents was to answer the question, *“how the organisations attract and retain their talent?”* The document analysis was guided by the information in Appendix 3 (Guide/Question for Review of the Documentation).

4.5.3.1. Providing appropriate pay and other compensation/ benefits

The provision of an appropriate pay and other compensation/benefits to talent within the organisation was one of the objective that was evident from documentation. Most participants regarded monetary payment (especially the salary) as a very important incentive for talent to stay in the hotel (e.g. D1H24, D2H4, D1H14, etc.). For example, the researcher had the opportunity to look at the planning guide (D2H4) that the organisation; and in it was the budget for rewarding high performers. The mission statement was given as: *“...to become the employee of choice is our mission. This can be achieved through building a good reputation inside and outside the organisation.....The key to that success is that there is 100,000 Bath budget set aside for rewarding good performers each year.”*

4.5.3.2. Building strong internal relationship / supervisory relationship

The participants indicated that to build strong internal relationships with the organisation as way of building loyalty among its talent. Photos of activities (e.g. sport, charities, New Year parties, and birthday parties) could be seen from most hotels' internal boards (e.g. D1H24, D1H23, and D5H20). Some of human resource management guides also specified that the part of the role of the HR department was to create a good working atmosphere and good relation between the organisation and the talent (e.g. D1H3, D1H5). For example, D1H3 pointed-out that: *"we create our environment to be appropriate to work, the owner, manager or the operators have to work as a team. The relationship in the team is important."*

4.5.3.3. Building the talent pipeline (succession planning/ opportunities

Building talent pipeline or preparing talent to fill future roles was evident from some documentation from the participating hotels (e.g. D1H12: Training Program, D1H14: Annual Report, and D1H20: Presentation Slide of Human Capital Development). For example, the document D1H14 (Annual Report of the Hotel) stated that; *"planning for talent to inherit and develop in key position is very important for the organisation as this reduces the risk of losing talent."* Moreover, D1H20 indicated that *"we have to prepare our workers to meet the required standard to be able to fill the future positions by providing regular training to employees."*

4.5.3.4. Giving authority and flexibility

Giving authority and flexibility are also one of the strategies used to retain talent in the organisation. For example, in the Annual Report (document code and page number) (D1H14) it was recorded that some of its achievement were due to workers being exercising their *"authority responsibly and within the limit of their responsibility."* This

entailed giving talent authority and the flexibility to make the decisions. However, such authority and flexibility could be limited or taken away if it is being abused.

4.5.3.5. Building employer branding/ employer attraction

Many participating hotels indicate that they attract talent by building their reputation to be the employer of choice, and to support this ‘claim’ documents were provided by H1, H3, H4, H14, H20, and H22. There is evidence of this issue in many document presented in the participating hotels. For example, the document D2H4 contained the mission statement; and the aim was stated as: *“to become the employer of choice is our mission. This can be achieved through building a good reputation both inside and outside of the organisation; and thus attracting potential talent from outside and inside the organisation.”* Furthermore, in D2H22 (Human Resource Planning) it stated *“the successful of our organisation is dependent on quality of service provided by our talented workforce; and the organisation needs to show that they are trying their best look after this talent.”*

4.5.3.6. Providing appropriate and adequate training

Apart from attracting talent with pay and other benefits, there was also evidence from the documentation that participating hotels regarded offering employee’s appropriate and adequate training as one of the important HR functions. This was observed in documentation relating to the training/human resource development program. What was interesting from the researcher’s point-of-view was the fact that these training programs existed and were so well documented. The researcher was given access to the training programs provided by three hotels (e.g. H1, H22, and H23), and there were specific training programs for each position level within those hotels. The message from D2H22 (human resource management guide) stated that: *“training and development, on property training, core-training, and task force) need to be fitted to the position to the positions.”* Similarly, D1H1 also showed the list of training slots (training times and venues) for different level on their internal board; and interestingly in this hotel, they provided space for the workers to suggest training that is relevant for their job roles. The organisation’s

role was to evaluate these suggestions and provide the training. Photos taken during the training sessions were evident on the internal notice boards of some of the hotels. For example, the internal notice board (D1H23) illustrated photos of training program for current employees; and we note that this demonstrated that the hotels ‘practise what they preach.’

4.5.3.7. Recognising and valuing talent’s performance from the organisation

One of the most noticeable attractive approaches to retain talent seen in the documentation was recognising and valuing talent’s performance. Some of the performance campaigns included ‘best employee of the month’, ‘employee of the year’. For example D3H26 (the organisation website) presented worker of the year and indicated how the workers had performed in the past year. The performance awards ranged from ‘money’ (e.g. D1H24); ‘vocation packages’ (e.g. D3H26); ‘certificates’ (e.g. D1H24, D1H29); and ‘promotions’ (e.g. D1H2)’. The document D3H26 pointed out that *“we recognise our employees for their commitment to delivering exceptional guest experiences and their passion for our business, including recognition of: Associates who demonstrate outstanding commitment to our guests and the success of their location or hotel; Managers who demonstrate exceptional leadership; Associates who demonstrate commitment to local communities; Associates who provide referrals for new employees, etc.”*

This approach is indicated as useful technique for attracting/motivating talent to stay in the organisation; and as noted in D1H3 (Human resource planning guide) *“best performer have to be noted and evaluated and as the result the reward should be consider to be given to the performer”*

4.5.3.8. Putting the right people to take the role of managing talent

It was indicated from the documents (D1H14, D2H20, D2H22, D2H23) provided by hotels H14, H20, H22 and H23, respectively, that when the organisation appointed/promoted talent into position, they also assigned him/her a ‘buddy’. The buddy was generally assigned to these new recruits for between at least a month and 3

months; and this allowed the new recruits to adapt and to feel comfortable. For example, D1H14 (Annual Report) stated that the objective of the organisation is that "*employees in high positions should have someone appointed whom can consult; and the consulter need to have enough experience.*" When the first stage of between 1 month and 3 months is finished, according to D2H22 (Human Resource Management Guide) "*there are mentors (mainly their supervisor) to monitor if the talent need any assistance during their work or whether they can develop to the highest performance and they can feel they are not alone in the organisation.*" . However, D1H14 indicated that the CEO should appoint those who are tasked with mapping strategies for managing talent; as this is such an important function. Mistake in this regard could lead to organisations being unable to retain talent in the organisation.

4.5.3.9. Summary of findings of approaches to managing talent (AMT) from selected documentation

Source of Document	AMT A	AMT B	AMT C	AMT D	AMT E	AMT F	AMT G	AMT H	AMT J	AMT K	AMT L
H1	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H2	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
H3	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
H4	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
H5	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H12	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H13	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
H14	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A
H15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H16	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H17	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H18	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H19	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H20	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	N/A
H21	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H22	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	N/A
H23	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A
H24	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
H25	✓	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H26	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
H27	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H28	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H29	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	18	11	13	0	3	7	9	9	0	4	0

Table 4.6: Summary of Documentation – findings by themes of the Approaches for Managing Talent (AMT)

Key to the Codes:

- A.** Providing appropriate pay and other compensation/benefits
- B.** Building the strong internal relationship / supervisory relationship
- C.** Build the talent pipeline (succession planning/opportunities)
- D.** Fulfilling organisational promises
- E.** Giving authority and flexibility
- F.** Building employer branding/ employer attraction
- G.** Providing appropriate and adequate training
- H.** Recognising and valuing their performance from the organisation
- J.** Promoting & selling the organisation's vision to new and current workers
- K.** Putting the right people to take the role on managing talent
- L.** Surrounding talent with good co-worker

4.5.4. Results from the direct non participant observations of approaches to managing talent (AMT)

This section presents the results/findings recorded from the direct observations carried out by the researcher while conducting the interviews. As with the documentation, the information presented here supplements the main findings that were based on the semi-structured interviews. The aim was to investigate how the hotels manage (attract talent and retain) talent. The questions are guided by the observation guide (See Appendix 3). The findings presented in details below.

4.5.4.1. Providing appropriate pay and other compensation/ benefits

The interviews and documents (see Sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.3 made it clear that participants are focused on attracting talent; and one such method was through providing appropriate pay and other benefits. The researcher also observed that there was provision of free shuttle buses (transportation), free accommodation and free staff clothing widely used in many hotels. However, the disadvantage (from experience) of free incentives such as staff accommodation is that it is shared accommodation and therefore not very comfortable. In addition, due to budgetary constraints such accommodation might be limited.

The problem of shared accommodation does not arise for people within certain positions. Thus, in some hotels from the supervisor or higher positions these roles get priority to live on their own and some are given the whole properties to live-in (e.g. H14, H28).

4.5.4.2. Building the strong internal relationship / supervisory relationship

The strategy of building strong positive relationships as a way of influencing talent retention first emerged through semi-structured interviews; and was confirmed through documentation. Furthermore, the researcher made ‘observations’ about the relationships

in the organisation. While waiting for the interview in the lobby of hotel, the researcher was quite surprised to observe the general manager interacting with fellow staff members and stopping to greet many staff members. They also appeared to be close to each other. The experience of H1 clearly indicates that the organisation culture can positively influence relationships within the organisation.

4.5.4.3. Building employer branding/ employer attraction

The fieldwork observation also provided evidence that the participating hotels build their reputation through local communities. For example, the researcher observed that the logo of H14 was in some of the waste bins, the playground, and the buildings for the nearby school that was supported and/funded by the hotel. The researcher observed that mostly international hotels were able to commit to funding these projects. This was due to their better financial strength.

4.5.4.4. Providing appropriate and adequate training

The researcher had an opportunity to attend one of the staff training programs for staff working in the beverage making department in H20. The program was scheduled for 1.5 hours, and while the training was planned very well, the time allotted was too short. The course was aimed at teaching staff about a new drink and how to serve customers correctly. The researcher over-heard the training attendants expressing satisfaction with the contents of the course; and indeed someone indicated that: *“it quite useful and this it is not one training we are always provided training and we love the way they do.”*

Hotels Observed	AMT A	AMT B	AMT C	AMT D	AMT E	AMT F	AMT G	AMT H	AMT J	AMT K	AMT L
H1	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H2	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H3	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H4	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H5	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H6	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H7	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H8	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H9	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H10	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H11	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H12	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H13	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H14	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H15	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H16	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H17	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H18	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H19	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H20	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H21	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H22	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H23	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H24	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H25	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H26	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H27	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H28	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
H29	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 4.7: Summary of Findings by Themes - Approaches for Managing Talent (AMT)
Reported for the Field Observation

Key to the Codes:

- A.** Providing appropriate pay and other compensation/benefits
- B.** Building the strong internal relationship / supervisory relationship
- C.** Build the talent pipeline (succession planning/opportunities)
- D.** Fulfilling organisational promises
- E.** Giving authority and flexibility
- F.** Building employer branding/ employer attraction
- G.** Providing appropriate and adequate training
- H.** Recognising and valuing their performance from the organisation
- J.** Promoting & selling the organisation's vision to new and current workers
- K.** Putting the right people to take the role on managing talent
- L.** Surrounding talent with good co-worker

4.5.5. Summary of the Findings of Approaches to Managing Talent (AMT) Emerging from Triangulation of Semi-structured Interviews, Review of Documentation and Observations

In summary, it is noted that there are many approaches that were adopted by participating hotels (See Table 4.8) which were all aimed at improving the management of talented workers. Some of these include providing appropriate pay and other compensation, building employer branding (talent attraction); promoting and selling the organisation's vision; fulfilling organisational promises; building the talent pipeline (succession planning); surrounding talent with good co-workers; authorisation and flexibility; training; putting the right people to take the role on managing talent; building strong relationships. However, it was also found that different hotels may suit or prefer to different approaches in managing talents based on the organisation's profile and policy, the trend or attitude of talented workers; and the conditions in the labour market.

Theme /Approaches to Managing Talent (AMT)	Semi-structured interviews	Documentation	Observation
Providing appropriate pay and other compensation/benefits	✓	✓	✓
Building the strong internal relationship/ supervisory relationship	✓	✓	✓
Build the talent pipeline (succession planning/opportunities)	✓	✓	N/A
Fulfilling organisational promises (do what u have made a promise)	✓	N/A	N/A
Giving authorisation and flexibility	✓	✓	N/A
Building employer branding/ employer attraction	✓	✓	✓
Providing appropriate and adequate training	✓	✓	✓
Recognising and valuing their performance from the organisation (e.g. award, certificate)	✓	✓	N/A
Promoting & selling the organisation's vision to new and current workers	✓	N/A	N/A
Putting the right people to take the role on managing talent	✓	N/A	N/A
Surrounding talent with good co-worker	✓	N/A	N/A

Table 4.8: Summary of the Results of Approaches to Managing Talent (AMT) via Triangulation of Methods

4.6. Emerging Themes from the Semi-Structured Interviews

This section presents a summary of the broad themes that emerged from this research. These themes can be organised into two categories, and these are: ‘Relation of talent retention and recruitment’, and ‘talent retention and development’. Thus, for example, GM2 mentioned that *“retaining talent is part of the whole process of HR activities; it includes building our reputation to the outsiders, developing them, building good relationship, good payment etc.”* Thus, the participants indicated that they use different approaches for managing talent within their organisation. Most of the approaches were aimed at talent retention. In addition to talent retention, the participants indicated that it was imperative to consider and link it with other strategies especially recruitment, selection, and development of talent.

4.6.1. Emerging Theme 1: Relation of Talent Retention to Recruitment and Selection

One of the main findings from this research is that ‘talent retention’ is a function of the ‘recruitment’ approach adopted. The participants regarded selection and recruitment of talent as important, and as having a direct impact on the retention of talent. Some of the approaches that were identified include human resource planning, job descriptions and specifications, sourcing of talent, and talent selection methods.

In particular, human resource (HR) planning was considered extremely important. Organisations have to have a good strategy in order to attract the best-fit workers (talent) who are willing to grow and develop within the organisation (e.g. GM1, HRM4, HRM12, LM3, LM12, and HRM6). As LM3 explained: *“we have clear long-term plans for employees within the hotel and these plans are revised annually.....not only that, but every month in the meeting we discuss if there are problems or any further requirements from the departments at all levels and the plans are revised any time if the circumstances demand a change.”* Similarly, LM12 asserted the importance of having an effective HRP by stating that, *“to manage employees efficiently we will follow the*

planning guide.... This is reviewed every year....it helps us to know how many people we need for every position... thus if this year the committee aims to increase the target customer base we have to plan (include HR planning) so as to be able achieve that goal...when the talented workers within the hotel see these clear plans, they are more willing to be with us.”

According to the participants, a major part of this whole process is identifying reliable ‘sources’ of talent (sources of talent) and planning for ‘resignation or employee movement’. With regards to ‘sources of talent’, the participants confirmed that talent is sourced internally, externally or using a combination of the two methods. While both methods were considered vital, the participants stated that they preferred to build talent from within the organisation through building talent pipeline, and only resort to external sources if they cannot find suitable ‘talent’ internally. For example, GM4 pointed-out that, *“for higher or senior positions, I will look for people inside the hotel first because they already fully understand the ethos of the hotel; as they have been with us for a period of time at the lower level (junior level) and we have already transformed them to our working style.”* The participants also noted that the main attraction of “internally sourcing of talent” is motivation and inspiration; and this can be achieved through having succession plans or building a pool of talented workers within the organisation. HRM9 said that, *“we have to allow employees to grow in their line base on their performance as our hotel’s succession planning...if they know they can grow they will stay with us and develop themselves... if we keep recruiting people from outside who will stay with us”*. Internally sourcing in turn adds value to the organisation since “internally talent” already understands the organisational values and ethics. For example, HRM 9 stated that, *“I consider recruiting internally due to the fast learning process of recruits to new positions ...the internal recruits are more qualified to understand the business nature, culture before being appointed into the new position; and this knowledge can result in better and faster effective outcomes. Whereas, recruiting from outside the organisations need to prepare the training which is also expensive and is a longer process.”*

However, some of the participants pointed-out that the disadvantage of internal recruitment is the lack of fresh ideas, and missing-out on better potential talent which is external to the organisation. Therefore, recruiting departments may opt for a combination of both external and internal recruits, and pick the best of those applicants. Furthermore, a few of the hotels claimed that a lack of budget led to failure to achieve the HR plan. For example, HRM1 stated that, *“at times there is not enough financial support which should make it feasible to follow the whole HRP programs...personally, I want to follow the plan as it would be very good if we can achieve it...we can reach a higher standard of working performance, reduce employee turnover (especially the rank and file levels which have a very high turnover rate)... but without money we just have to accept failure to follow the HR plan and work as best as we can to manage our employees.”*

With regards to employees who resign, the hotels had time to get replacements through requiring that these employees serve a compulsory one-month notice period. HRM 17 said that. *“we think about recruiting new employees when someone decides to leave...we require the leaving employee to serve a month’s notice period and use this period to replace them with new employees, as set in the plan...”*. The success of the strategy is dependent linking the HRP plans and the main business strategy. Thus for example GM4 indicated that, *“we have the main plan for all the employees and sub-plans for the individual departments. All plans are set on the basis of the requirements of the business strategy and our employee...good planning has to consider how to meet employee training needs... the number of employee, incentives, training needs, employee expectations, working hours, holidays, benefit, etc... anything related to the employee have to be stated clearly...then the management team can use this guide to manage employees.”*

The participants also indicated that the success of the hotels in replacing workers who retire or leave the organisation is dependent on the selection methods and decision-making approaches adopted. The process of selection starts from initial screening to the formal selection; and the participants stated that they select candidates based on how they fit the job (based on the job description and person specification) and how they fit

with the organisational culture. For example, LM9 indicated that *“we don’t select employees only just because they can work or they know how to work but more on how they can fit with the team”*. Similar sentiments were expressed by GM1 who argued that *“candidates who get selected in our hotels have to have the standard skills and also the ability to transform themselves to ‘commit to the hotel’s name’.”* In principle, this should help with talent retention, and reduce talent turnover. For example, GM4 indicated that *“we check the profile of both internal and external candidates on the length of stay in the previous company; if they stay less than 1 year we are not considering to hire those people because they might leaving us soon.”*

Furthermore, part of that involves creating transparency in how workers are shortlisted and recruited. Some participants indicated that they use assessor training and triangulation of the assessor to achieve this transparency. The participants observed that all the assessors have to be trained to be able to evaluate and select the right talented workers; while also triangulating the decision making process to different management positions — human resource managers, department managers and/or general managers/owners. For example, GM4 explained that this ensured that the decision cannot be biased, and that *“all candidates here have to follow the same process. They first have to have the interview with the human resource manager who contributes 20 per cent towards the total score; the head of department 70 per cent; and 10 per cent belong to the GM. We analyse the best fit candidate from the total score...the score is marked the same way by the different sections”*. However, some participants did not follow the process, and the cases generally related to relatives of senior managers. Thus, for example, HRM11 told us with a disappointed face: *“I cannot do anything if the candidate is referred by the management... ”*.

In summary, it is noted that effective selection and decision-making can help the organisation to choose the right worker who will ultimately stay with the organisation for a long time. This should be based on criteria such as person–job fit, person–organization fit, and person–workgroup fit. Knowledge, skills, and abilities should be used to evaluate person–job fit, etc. Also, values and needs should be used to assess person–organization fit. Interpersonal attributes and broad-based proficiencies should be

used to assess person–workgroup fit. It is anticipated that if organisations choose the talented workers who fit the organisation fit, fit the workgroup, fit the job then they are more than likely to choose to stay with the organisation.

4.6.2. Emerging Theme 2 – Relation of Talent Retention to Development

The other relationship that was uncovered as relevant for the participants linking talent development with talent retention. Developing talent was one of the approaches that the participants took into consideration in order to retain talents; and this was described as building talent pipelines. This is achieved through effective training programmes.

The participating hotels suggested that they build their own talented workers in different levels of the organisations. HRM18 noted that, *“the more opportunities afforded to talent within the hotel to be part of the talent pipeline and the career pathways...the more talent will stay”*. Meanwhile HRM1 cautioned against lack of transparency by stating that, *“any movement (promotion) of our staff needs be transparent as it might affect other workers.”*

The participants commented that, in order to build strong talent pipeline, an effective training programme is one of the keys to success. For example, LM7 indicated that they had a training course for all workers (new workers and current workers). This helps them to understand their job role and to improve in it. He stated that, *“we have a training course for new employees and development course for current workers. The training course for new employees is undertaken as soon as they start working for us”*. The training should also be set at an appropriate time and for an adequate period in order to build strong talented workers in the talent pipeline. For example, GM4 indicated that, *“all members have to learn how we work here and adapt to our hotel’s style... the training takes place within at least a week of starting employment. However, depending on whether new employees need more training or not, we always provide that on request... we are not relying on the employees request only, we have mentors and these mentors may require training themselves.”*

Also, the participants affirmed that they use induction (or orientation) programs for new starters as part of talent development. As part of the warm welcome, it is not surprising that all hotels developed an induction program for these new employees. However, other approaches were also adopted as part of the induction program; and these include things such as ‘a formal meeting with the management team’ (e.g. GM1, GM3, HRM4, HRM12), ‘induction hand-outs’ (induction pack) (e.g. LM11, HRM10), and ‘a buddy’ (e.g. LM4, LM9). For example, GM3 commented that a, *“sincere induction of new employee is crucial. We give an overview of the hotel, the rules, promotion opportunities, benefits and everything that they should know; and this is done by the HR department... followed up by a meeting with the GM, chief executives, heads of departments for about an hour...then the tour of the hotel is left for the individual department head... we believe that the first impression about our hotel will make them enthusiastic to work for us... I always inform all our employees that from the first day we have to make the new employee feel good... this will make the best impression about our hotel and will make them (talent) want stay with us.”*

It is noted that among participating hotels, talent development is regarded as an important aspect that is closely linked to talent retention. Thus, building talent pipeline by training and developing internal workers is one such strategy adopted by participating hotels as a way of retaining talent. Furthermore, the participants noted that no-matter how good talent is, they have to learn and adapt to their new organisation style. This also makes talent to see that the organisation regards them as important and valued resources within the organisation.

In conclusion, it is noted from the participants that talent recruitment, selection, and talent development are considered as important aspects which help organisations with their talent retention endeavours. Evidently, no single HR activity can stand alone but rather all of them have to be linked to each other with the ultimate aim of meeting the goal of the organisation.

4.7. Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter has presented the findings of the empirical research, which aimed to investigate applicability of the concept of talent and talent management within the hospitality industry and with a particular focus on selected hotels in Thailand. The findings are from the semi-structured interviews, direct non-participant observations and documentary analysis; and these broken down into subthemes such as definitions of talent, qualities of talent and managing talent.

It started from the understanding of the background of the term talent in among participants, and the results show that talent within the hotel industry mainly refers to some workers and specifically managerial talent. The qualities of talent, among the participating hotels, also referred to the combinations: competencies required by the organisation; commitment (to work, organisation, and industry); and contribution to both customer and co-workers.

In addition to the definition and identification of talent, the importance of talent (especially to assisting the organisation to remain competitive) was also presented. Furthermore, the challenges of managing talent such as talent retention were presented. Different approaches to talent retention were presented.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

The research investigated how the concept of talent is applied in the hospitality industry including the definition, identification and qualities of talent within this industry. Furthermore, the research investigated how talent is managed among the participating Thai hotels. Regarding managing talent, the research also specifically investigated how those hotels attract, motivate and retain talents. In addition, the conclusion drawn in Chapter 4 was that attracting, motivating and retaining talent are the most important aspects of managing talent. The participants in the research were managers of selected hotels that are members of the Thai Hotel Association (THA). The study was conducted within the context of the introduction of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

While the findings are presented in Chapter 4, this chapter discusses these findings. Thus, Sections 5.2 and 5.3 will discuss the issues emerging from the empirical fieldwork. These have been categorised accordingly into identification and definitions of talent; challenges of managing talent; and the management of talent, respectively.

5.2. Application of the Concept of Talent in the Hospitality Industry

This section discusses the findings of the application of the concept of talent in the hotel sector as part of the wider hospitality industry. It has been argued that the concept of

“...talent is an extremely complex concept that is hard to define and lacks a clear theoretical framework. A key factor in this lack of consensus is the perennial debate regarding the relative contribution of nature and nurture in the development of talent” (Vaeyens, Lenoir, Williams, & Philippaerts, 2008, p. 706).

The phrase ‘war for talent’ was coined by McKinsey Consultant Company in 1998, and as a result, since the late 1990s, researchers and practitioners became more focused on

the concept (Iles, Chuai, et al., 2010; Kim & McLean, 2012). The phrase ‘war for talent’ is concerned with organisations’ ability to attract and motivate talents to ‘join and stay’. Talent management (TM) is used as the strategy for managing talent. The strategy of TM includes defining and identifying talent, recruitment, selection, development, and retention (Armstrong, 2009; Blass, 2007; Goffee & Jones, 2007; Grobler & Diedericks, 2009; Medlik & Ingram, 2000; Stahl et al., 2012). It has been argued that the first activity should be to define talent and come up with the criteria for identifying it. Once the criterion has been established; other activities such as recruitment, development and retention can follow (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Stahl et al., 2012).

Many of the research previously conducted within the area of talent management have mainly focused on defining talent within domains such as the Information Technology (IT) industry, Estate industry, and automotive industry (e.g. Björkman et al., (2013); Bhatnagar, (2008): Michaels et al., (2001); Phillips & Roper, (2008). However, as Iles (2013) and CIPD (2007) concluded, the term talent might mean different things to different organisations depending on the nature of work. Similarly, we thus contend that the term talent might have a different meaning when applied within the hospitality industry; and in actual fact this was also suggested by Baum (2008). Baum (2008) noted that talent in hospitality industry might not be the same as in other industries. The hospitality industry is one of the biggest contributors (and with the greatest share) to world economic GDP; and we argue that its continued growth in the future relies on having the right workers. Despite this fact, the concept of talent within this field of study has rarely been discussed and hence the lack of precise definition of the term talent.

The hospitality industry and hotel sector in particular is generally heavily labour intensive, with a varied labour-force ranging from housekeepers to top managerial positions. Hotels also rely a lot on low skilled or unskilled workers (Baum, 1993, 2008; Duncan et al., 2013; Price, 1994). In spite of the above, the research generally found that the concept of ‘talent’ was widely used within the participating hotels. However, there was no consensus on the definitions and this section will explore how the concept of talent is applied in the hospitality industry.

The questions that were addressed in this research: whether the concept of talent is applicable to the hospitality industry, particularly in the hotel sector; and how widely it is used. The conclusion that can be drawn from the findings of this research is that: *The concept of talent is widely used and applied in the hospitality industry.*

The hospitality industry (especially the hotel sector) has long been stereotyped (probably correctly) as being highly demanding, offering low wages, with low skilled workers, etc. (Davidson, Timo, & Wang, 2010; Duncan et al., 2013; Iverson & Deery, 1997; Price, 1994). The question that could have arisen therefore is whether the concept of talent existed or is applicable in this industry. The findings presented in Chapter 4 clearly indicated that the concept of talent is widely known and used within those participating hotels in Thailand.

Despite the stereotyping of this industry, this study has found that the concept of talent exists, and is widely used and applied among participating hotels. It is evident from the various definitions of talent given by the participants that talent is the driver for coping with complexity in the organisation. As a result, this definition might mean different things to different organisations. The findings confirmed that the concept of talent is applied in the hospitality industry and especially in hotels.

The participants indicated that they expected individuals who were identified as talent to make a difference compared to those labelled as 'ordinary workers', and that this can help the organisation to remain competitive. It is not surprising that the expectation is for talent to assist the organisation to remain competitive (Handfield-Jones et al., 2001). A similar study by Lunn (1992, p. 13) also supported the notion that talent perform better than average worker in all types of work, and concluded that on average talent performs 52% better on low complex tasks, 52% on average tasks, and 127% better on highly complex tasks.

The researcher presented the findings on the definitions of talents among the participating hotels in Section 4.3. Although Iles (2013) suggested that most

organisations do not know how to identify talents, contrary to this most of the participating hotels in Thailand appeared to have a clear view about talents and indeed the term was well known. However, the individual participating hotels defined talents differently, and there was no clear consensus on definitions of talented workers (Gelens et al., 2013; Iles, 2013; Iles, Chuai, et al., 2010; Tansley et al., 2013; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012). The lack of consensus appears to be in line with the views of Tansley (2011, p.267) who argued that the *“term of talented workers has varied greatly with time, people, and locality.”* Furthermore, the CIPD (2007) research similarly concluded that talent is defined based on organisation-specific work, and is highly influenced by the nature of work and type of industry that is dynamic. Thus, while we conclude that ‘there was no clear consensus on definitions of talented workers’, we however also note the definitions appeared to be a function of the variables such as organisational culture, organisational goals and policies, the economic situation, etc. Thus for example, the participants appeared to be aligning their definitions to organisational goals and strategies. This partly explains why the definitions varied greatly among the participants.

Despite the fact that it has been concluded that there are differences in the definitions adopted by the participants, there is evidence that there are shared commonalities in the definitions of talent within participating hotels. Based on the views of the participating hotels it was evident that the definition and identification of talent referred more to the abilities (or qualities) that the individual possesses. The findings are in-line with the conclusions of the research by Tansley (2011), Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012, Gallardo Gallardo et al., 2013; Iles (2013); Davies et al. (2007). The idea is that talent is *“often organisation-specific, and is highly influenced by the nature of the work”* (Iles, 2013, p. 302).

Furthermore, the question that we sought to address here is “How is talent defined here?” and what are its qualities? During the research we uncovered that there are various definitions of talent (see discussion above), and we also take the view that the qualities of talent essentially define talent (that is, the definition cannot be easily separated from the qualities that are required). Consequently, Section 5.2.1 will focus on the qualities of talent.

5.2.1. Talent is the Sum of Capability, Commitment, Loyalty, and Contribution

Although there was no clear consensus on the precise definition of talent based on the semi-structured interviews, review of selected documentation and direct non-participant observations), there was some consensus on the qualities that talent should possess. The participants identified talent as individuals who possess the combination of capability, commitment, loyalty and contribution. The focus among the participating hotels was on the abilities/qualities of talent. The researcher concluded that both soft-skills (behaviour) and hard-skills were needed to develop the best talent. The skills are listed below (competency, capability, experience, and motivation); and these are in-line with those identified by Hesketh (2013, p.5). Additionally, the contribution of talent was identified as another key quality of talent (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012; Michaels, et al, 2001).

Potential leadership skills were also identified as a key quality. A study by Ulrich and Smallwood (2012, pp. 57-59) indicated that potential leadership cadres should possess the combination of ambition, ability, agility, and achievement. These qualities would mostly apply to talent at managerial level. However, Ulrich and Smallwood (2012, p. 60) also found that all work is also labelled as talent when it meets the criteria of competence (require for today and tomorrow's job) and commitment (willing to work and finding the meaning of work). Thus, talent must have skills, willingness, and purpose; and also capability, commitment, loyalty and contribution to the organisation.

Below is the list of qualities of talent identified by the participating hotels — high capability (soft skills and hard skills needed for the position, organisation, and industry); commitment (self-motivation to job and work in the industry), loyalty (self-sacrifice for good of the organisation); and contribution (to customer, co-worker, and organisation).

5.2.1.1. Individual capability (competence) – soft skills

Soft skills were identified as important qualities of talent within participating hotels. This might be because in customer facing industries, such as the service or hospitality industry, customer related skills were more likely to be highly sought. The participating hotels rely on talent in key positions, and hence the focus on managerial talent. The importance of managerial capability as a soft skill was also cited in Weber et al. (2013). Therefore, soft skills for managerial talent in the hospitality industry are highly sought-after among the participating hotels. Various soft skills uncovered in the research are discussed below.

Service-mindedness/ customer care. The participating hotels identified this criterion as an important quality within the hospitality industry and thus service-mindedness is a fundamental quality that talent should possess. Service-mindedness was also referred to as the quality of offering a quality service with a smile (smiling face), which is driven from the inner-self. The reason why service-mindedness was important among the participating hotels is that it is identified as one of the drivers of quality service to customers. Theoretically, employee's service mindedness and thoughtful action increases customer perception, and therefore leads to a favourable image of the hotel (Kandampully & Hu, 2007, p. 437). The behaviour performed by the employee as an indication of service-mindedness include, for instance, politeness, courtesy, friendliness, and helpfulness. These qualities were also identified by Aldlaigan & Buttle (2002).

The idea that workers should provide a service with a smile was strongly emphasised during interviews. This may have been influenced by the culture of Thailand; with Thailand being well-known as the '*land of smile*' (Lewis, 2000). The cultural nature of Thai people is to smile at all occasions, and this is an important quality in a service related industry. Therefore, being service-minded within this research context meant '*service and smile*' (Tuohy, 2013; Wiebusch, 2014). Tuohy (2013) described this kind of smiling as 'yim thang taa' or happy smile from the eyes and mouth; and 'yim thak jai' or the polite smile for someone you barely know (customers in this case). Wiebusch

(2014) argued that this nature of smiling is beneficial for the organisation in attracting customers.

Sharing and team working was described as one of the fundamental qualities of potential talented hotel workers. It is noted that this is the ability and commitment of individuals to work and collaborate effectively with others on tasks; team working; social intelligence; cultural and diversity awareness; and conflict resolution (Jackson, 2015). This particular competence is necessary and required from the leader; as they might need to coach, lead, train, and develop talent (Johanson, Ghiselli, Shea, & Roberts, 2011; Suh, West, & Shin, 2012).

Within the cultural context of Thailand, sharing and team working is also viewed as an indication of a good person. The word sharing in Thai can refer to 'Num-Jai' or the way of encompassing warmth and compassion to the others; that is customers and co-workers within the context of a business environment. This idea of sharing is rooted in the influence of the Buddhist religion (Weerakit, 2007). The Thai people are also more likely to work as a team, and are less individualistic (Hofstede, 1984). Thus, organisational needs and the cultural context in which they operate make the competence of team working a very important quality for the participating hotels.

Good appearance was another quality of talent that was identified as important by hotels. This quality is perhaps not surprising and unavoidable in the case of service organisations such as hotels. Well-groomed individuals breed trust and satisfaction among customers; and this can be the difference between customers coming back and creating repeat business, or not. For example, the front-line departments have direct contact with customers, and thus have to look good at all times to attract customers. The importance of good appearance is also cited by Nickson, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2005 who note that hotels present their brand by advertising the appearance of the provider as well as the service facilities. Workers are representatives of the organisation, and their dress code sends a message to customers; and the organisation expects customers to recognise them through personal presentation. Good appearance includes language, dress codes, shape and size of body, manner and style; these are considered to appeal to the

customers. Research by Gustafsson, Edvardsson, Nickson, Warhurst, and Dutton (2005) supported this finding that 93 per cent of respondent employers in the retail and hospitality industries in Glasgow considered appearance as an important quality in the retail and hospitality industry. Their view was that this soft skill was important. The 'look good and sound right' quality is a necessary quality in customer interactive services such as the hospitality industry and hotel sector.

Public and social relation skills were regarded as another important quality of talent by the participating hotels. This is the skill to transfer/communicate information of the organisation within and outside the organisation appropriately. Professionals in the hospitality industry such as students and university staff indicated that it is important for graduates to possess public relations skills (Ruetzler, Baker, Reynolds, Taylor, & Allen, 2014). This skill is needed because the hotel market is a global market, and therefore good relations (or connections) with the outside world would enhance the organisation's brand image.

Open-mindedness: This is the willingness to learn and adapt; and is thus a vital quality for talent to possess. From the findings, the participating hotels are looking for the people who are willing to work within the hotels and can adapt their previous experiences with the organisation culture. The organisation needs workers who fit the organisational culture (Ansah, 2010; Schein & Schein, 1978; Wiener & Vardi, 1980) or the person-organisation fit. Abbot and Collins (2004) and Ericsson et al (1993) described talented people as individuals who have high commitment and motivation to remain experts by constantly training. Thus, open-mindedness is one of the important qualities of talent if it is to be able to constantly adapt to different situations.

Positive attitude is considered to be one of the more desirable qualities that talents have to possess. This is because employees' attitudes and behaviour can help the organisation to meet the organisation's expectations (Boxall & Macky, 2009). Hotels look for individuals who have a positive attitude about themselves, previous organisation they have worked for, the organisation they are going to work, and especially with customers. Hotel customers are well known to be highly demanding customers (Baum, 2008).

Therefore, the need for a positive attitude should not be missed out as it is indicated the will of particular work.

Patience and respectfulness were also considered as vital qualities of talent. Hotel work is demanding in nature and requires hard-work. The characteristics of hotels including for example shift work, long working hours, etc. create pressure of work (Lashley, 2001; Lee & Way, 2010; Lin, 2013). Another reason why hotels require individuals who are patient is that they work with very demanding customers (Baum, 2008). Thus, the employees are expected to be calm, polite and patient to the different kinds of customers and their tempers. Seybold (2001) noted, in customer-oriented industry the provider need to provide good quality of service to meet the customer demands fairly and respectfully (Chen, 2013). This nature of work in the hospitality industry may be the reason why most of the hotels indicated that the talents have to have the patience quality.

Communication skills and interpersonal skill include verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Not surprisingly, most of the participants focused on talent's ability to communicate. The ability to use a foreign language to communicate with customers was widely viewed as a vital ability by many hotels. The ability to use English language was perceived as especially more important by the participants. However, we noted that this depended on the target customers. Thus, if the main customers were Thai then the requirement of English language usage was low; and yet if the main target customers were foreigners then they would be a higher requirement to use the English language. The requirement of being able to use English also depended on the positions and departments. For example, the housekeeper may need to know just how to greet the guests and offer basic explanations, while the front office employees need to know more details and be able to have a detailed conversation with the guests.

The ability to communicate is vital and more so the ability to communicate with customers and co-workers. Within this environment, transferring information to others has to be done correctly, quickly and successfully. Koprowska (2014) observes that communication skills/interpersonal skills cannot be learnt through reading; individuals

have to practice it in everyday life. Effective communication skills help the users to build better relationships with others.

The need for communication skills, especially the ability to use English is needed in developing economies like Thailand where English is not commonly used. This is because hotel services that meet international standards are necessary for hotels in these economies for them to remain competitive. Other foreign languages such as Chinese and Russian are also needed in many hotels. This is consistent with the findings of Baum (2002) who argued that working in a hotel maybe viewed as highly valuable in developing countries. He also contended therefore that work that may be unskilled in Europe and the USA may not be universally described as ‘low skilled’.

The importance of communication skills within this environment cannot be underestimated. Recent studies, for example, found that both oral and written communications skills are important (Ruetzler et al., 2014). Furthermore, the research by Chan and Kuok (2011, p. 434) suggested that in the hospitality industry the organisation need to hire “*those with communication competencies (good human relation skills, verbal, and listening skills) to provide quality service, instead of just hiring employees with job related knowledge or degrees.*” The reason for emphasising good communication rather than knowledge and qualification is that it will be virtually impossible to build the necessary relationships to successfully provide an above standard service, especially in a customer facing industry like hotels.

Management knowledge and skills includes leadership and strategic skills. Among the participating hotels management knowledge, leadership skills, and ability to think strategically were considered important qualities by those individuals in the key positions. The participating hotels viewed management knowledge and skill as vital skills in order to satisfy customer relationships, and influence co-workers to work well. Talent can also use their management ability to manage other resources effectively; and thus drive effective work. The research by Ruetzler et al. (2014) similarly found that time management and strategic skills/strategic planning is a highly sort-out skill for managerial talent in the hospitality industry.

While there is recognition and a desire to find managerial talent that fits this profile, a report by Bournois (1993) showed that the labour markets conditions make this the greatest problems in recruiting talent (Barron, 2008, p. 731). The ability of talent to have a strategic view was considered as important by the participating hotels; especially concerning the awareness of customer needs, commitment to quality, managing stakeholders, and concern for the community. The participating hotels indicated that they therefore build or hire talent with management, leadership, and/or strategic skills in a bid to meet this objective.

5.2.1.2. Individual capability (competence) – hard knowledge and skills

In addition to the soft skills discussed above, hard skills are also considered vital skills that are needed in the hospitality industry. These skills of talented workers are indicated according to the need of the positional needs, organisational need, and industry needs. We found that these skills are well presented through the education qualification, experiences, and training qualifications of individuals. Hard skills needed in the hospitality industry are discussed below.

Knowledge of the industry and work is viewed as the most important competence; and is therefore a fundamental criterion of talent. The respondents from the participating hotels believed the quality of knowledge and skills of the industry and work is the source of talent motivation and commitment to work on standard of industry and work. Also, it is expected that the understanding of work and industry will help the workers to contribute effectively in the workplace, acting as a role model for both team-members and customers.

The view that knowledge of the industry and work is fundamental contradicts the findings of the study by Chung-Herrera, Enz, and Lankau (2003) which concluded that this criterion was not considered as one of the most important criteria. They argued that knowledge and skills of work and industry can be easily learned once a person is employed in the position.

Meanwhile, the research by Suh et al. (2012) investigated core-competence of future managers in the hospitality industry and concluded that ‘knowledge of industry and work’ is one of the most important qualities of talent; and in this research some of the hotels wanted ‘ready-made persons’ to fill the key positions. This was mainly due to budget and time constraints. For example some participants indicated that they have no time to offer training and thus only provided basic training. Therefore, accordingly talent has to have the knowledge and skill of the work and the industry in order to maintain a good standard of management and service quality as key roles in the organisation.

Experience is one of the vital qualities according to the participating hotels. This was evident, for example, in the requirement that key talent have at least three experiences. It is not surprisingly that the participants perceived that talent should possess some level of experience. The need for experience is consistent with findings from McCall (1998) who concluded that people can gain knowledge and skill from their experience because throughout the period, they can gain a broad understanding of different situations (e.g. mistakes, risk, problem) and be able to manage/ cope with it. In an industry such as the service industry that is driven by principles such as ‘saving the reputation’ and ‘maintaining or improving customer satisfaction’, key talents are drivers of such targets and therefore must have some pre-requisite experiences in order to lead the team to reach its service quality standard.

While experience was clearly desirable among the participating hotels, the realities of the labour market might make this unachievable. The findings by Chan and Kuok (2011) proved that it is difficult to recruit talent with experience; and it notes that 59% of employers recruit candidates with no experience because they believe that experiences can be gained on the job training.

Problem Solving - Furthermore, talent should possess problem-solving skills. The nature of the hospitality industry is such that sometimes it needs immediate and effective responses (Baum 2002, 2008). However, this skill cannot be built up within a short

period; and thus talent is expected to possess these skills as a prerequisite so as to be able to deal with different problems or situations.

Understanding human needs: In this respect talent have to be able to understand the expectation of customers and co-workers. Regarding customers, customer relations skills are recommended from the review document in hospitality industry and it is consistent with the needs in the area of hotel management, F & B management, and private club management (Johanson et al., 2011, p. 46). This skill is vital since talent has to be able to serve and satisfy the needs of customers promptly and correctly. Thus, the worker should be able to solve customers' problems and manage the guest's problems with understanding and sensitivity.

The participants expect talent to be role models and team leaders, hence why they require them to be more understanding of the needs of co-workers or team-members. Being able to understand the needs of subordinates is an important quality. As a result it is expected that their role of coaching and training co-workers will go smoother. Therefore, knowledge of human needs is important for talent workers in the hotel industry because this industry needs to create great relations and satisfaction to both customer and team-workers.

Computer knowledge and skills: In this age of technology, the requirement for talent to have this skill is probably not surprising. Hotel businesses now operate online services such as customer's databases, customer bookings, and advertising; and the computer is the main tool for organisations linking to the outside world.

Talent is required to have knowledge of spreadsheets such as financial reports, schedules, and revenues, and such skills are needed in the hospitality industry (Ruetzler et al., 2014). Knowledge of dealing with customer's databases, customer's bookings, and advertising are basic computer skills required. Ruetzler et al., (2014) also found that social networking skills are necessary in today's business and is preferred by the new generation (e.g. Facebook).

Undoubtedly, it is vital for talent to at least have computer knowledge and skills. The research by Johanson et al. (2013) pinpointed that 25 years ago the basic skill needed of talent in hospitality industry was on Word processing, Excel spreadsheets, and/or Powerpoint skills. Nowadays, social media skills are needed from the hotel's leaders. Social media tools such as 'Facebook' and 'Line' applications are widely used among the participating hotels and they use this in order to communicate with outsiders and during recruitment exercises. Therefore, computer skills need to be added as one of the competences of talent in the job specification.

In conclusion, it is noted that Section 5.2.1.1 and 5.2.1.2 revealed that both soft skills and hard skills are vital competencies and capabilities needed from talented workers in the Thai hospitality industry. The organisations expected that talented workers have to gain these skills and knowledge through formal education, training, and experiences in related work. In the case of Thailand, the capabilities needed by the hospitality industry are high, but as discussed the reality of this industry is that there is a lack of skills and capabilities to match the expectations. The expectations from the industry might be far from reality. Therefore, many organisations have to accept some compromises in terms of the qualities that they accept and expect from talented workers.

5.2.1.3. Commitment to work and industry

Commitment is another quality that was used to define and identify talent among the participating hotels. This entails commitment to work and to the industry. This is commitment and performance which is driven, and which results from or is motivated by personal self-directed decision making in the job. This also manifest itself among team-members/co-workers, organisation, and industry (nature of work). This view is consistent with the concept of person-environment fit (PE) as proposed by Schein (1978, 1996). In the PE model the career choice/decision making is based on self-perceived competency, self-perceived motives and needs, self-perceived value, self-reliant and opportunity to develop. Perhaps individuals who have no commitment are not willing to use their knowledge and ability. Moreover, research by Greguras and Diefendorff (2009)

found that if there is PE fit (that is, person-organisation fit, demands-abilities fit, etc.) then this directly impacts on commitment.

Thus, assigning individuals work that matches their knowledge and skills (person-job fit) is the first criteria to presume that the individual will feel comfortable to work well in their area (demands-abilities fit). Person-industry fit is added to literature as most of the research only look at the person-job fit, person-organisation fit, and person-supervisor/team fit as the factors for commitment (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Kristof, 1996).

Therefore, commitment is necessary for talent. This is because however competent someone appears to be in terms job fit; without the commitment, they will not be happy and not produce the best performance (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012). Similarly, for example studies by Al-Ahmadi (2009), Greguras and Diefendorff (2009), and Kristof-Brown et al. (2009) found that commitment correlates to the work performance. This is one of the main reasons why commitment is also highly regarded according to participating hotels. Perceived fits is a fundamental consideration in personal commitment and it can be used to predict the attitude and behaviour at work (e.g. Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Kristof, 1996).

5.2.1.4. Loyalty to the organisation

The findings also indicated that participants needed talented workers whom they can trust to work for their organisation. These workers have to be loyal to the organisation and commit to work for the organisation and in the industry; which also implies that they can continuously provide service quality. The hotels described the person who is loyal to the organisation as someone who wants to learn and grow within the organisation. Loyalty seems to be an important quality of talented workers within the Thai hospitality industry. The requirement for loyalty within the context of the Thai hospitality industry is a function of the culture and religion; of which Thai culture and religion play an important role.

For example the study of Kamoche (2000) noted that organisations in Thailand expected their employees to 'bunkhun'. This is an act of reciprocity; that is, reciprocation of the goodness, kindness and consideration of other employees and their well-being. Moreover, as part of the Buddhism teaching, individuals are taught the virtues of providing consideration and sincere sacrifices to others; especially repaying the person/organisation that have been good to you previously. Thus, according to participants talented workers should recognise and reciprocate to the organisation through contributing the best performance, and through wanting to learn and grow with the organisation.

Therefore, within the context of the Thai hospitality industry, loyalty is vital quality which participants required from their talented workers.

5.2.1.5. Contribution to the organisation success: contribution to customers and motivation of co-workers

Researchers and practitioners defined talent as high performers with high potential (e.g. McKinsey 1998 study cited in Michaels et al, 2001). Thus workers' performance is one of the most important qualities of talent. Rather than focusing on input qualities only such capability, commitment, and loyalty as identified and discussed earlier, there should be considerably more focus on output quality as well. The combination of these aspects forms talent.

Contribution to the organisation success (output) can be through customer satisfaction (e.g. comply with service standards offered), and repeat buys (returning customers); also through satisfying and motivating co-workers to contribute the highest standard of work (e.g. coaching, training) and acting as role models. However, this is output of work that individuals have already done but at the recruitment stage one has to be able to evaluate workers' performance. This can be based on their past work — internal or external past performances.

It can thus be concluded that the definition of talent within participating hotel is the sum of input qualities — capability (soft skills and hard skills), commitment to work, commitment to the industry (willingness to work), and loyalty to organisation; and output qualities — contribution to organisation, team-members (co-workers), and customers. These qualities are not distinguishable in order to define talent within participating hotels.

Regarding the capabilities, we noted that the participating hotels took into consideration both hard skills soft skills. However, the emphasis was more on soft skills than on hard skills. Examples of the hard skills that were sort-out such as knowledge of the industry, communication skills, and computer skills; while soft skills included service mindedness, team working, and strategic management /leadership skills. Furthermore, public relation skills were considered as important; and this can be viewed as an indication that in the current business environment organisations have to build good relationship with the outsider, known as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Hence, the emphasis is on public relations. Public relation skills are needed for building the organisation's brand. The corporate image can be built through social media, and hence the requirement for computer skills in this era of advanced technology.

Changes in economic situations have necessitated the need for a combination of high knowledge and skills, and multi-skilled talent. This is consistent with the findings from the literature review in which Baum (2002) indicated that changes in the economic situation result in changes of skills required of hotel staff. Thus, multi-skilled staff members are mostly preferred since they can cope with these skills set changes. This trend of wanting workers who are multi-skilled was also noted in the many of the hotels that took part in the research. This might also be because they want to rotate workers in different roles and more-so for key leaders having a broader knowledge and skills set means that they can lead the team. Due to the shortage of skills worldwide, hotels need staff with more than technical competencies. They also need communications skills, people management skills, and problem solving skills (Ruetzler et al., 2014).

The other input qualities of talent such as loyalty to the organisation, and commitment to the job and to the industry are presented as important qualities among the participating hotels. The participants argued that inner motivation, commitment, and loyalty can lead individuals to contribute the best performance.

The capabilities that talents possess should match the needs of organisation and the job roles. Therefore, talent is defined as the sum of capabilities, commitment, loyalty, and contribution. These are greatly influenced by the business strategy, culture and policies. Furthermore, the influences of the individual's perception, customer types, and job tasks required, location of hotels, and economic situation were regarded as important considerations in this definition.

In Asia, business skills and management and leadership skills are top priorities in terms of skills that need to be built. This is followed closely by communication/interpersonal skills (43%) and technical skills (36%). Skills that come across as less of a priority include IT skills (17%), work ethic (11%) and literacy and numeracy (7%).

5.2.2. Nature of talent within the hotel sector

This section addresses questions about the nature of talent within the hotel. As we have seen above, talent is defined and identified through the qualities that they possess; and this was clearly presented in the findings chapter. Concerning the question about the nature of talent, three questions arise. Is talent an acquired or natural skill? Is it all workers or some workers? Is it context dependent or transferable?

5.2.2.1. Talent refers to acquired ability rather than pure natural ability

In addition to the qualities discussed above; another closely related question that arose during the research was the question of whether talent among the participating hotels is learnt or natural? The debate on whether talent is an ability that can be acquired (learnt, nurture) versus talent as pure natural ability (gifted) is not new. Indeed it is one that has been raging in many other areas of research. The findings as reported in Section 4.3.2.2 indicated that there are hardly any roles within hotels that depend entirely on pure

natural ability or purely on acquired skills. Instead, it is the combination of natural talent ability and nurture (acquired) that constitutes talent in this area. In fact, we can conclude from the findings that talent within this industry is more an acquired ability than natural ability. The acquired (learnt) qualities/skills are gained from experience, training, or education. Most of the participants also viewed talent's abilities as being more heavily reliant on acquired (nurture) compared to natural skills.

Very few participants defined talent based purely on natural ability. In this category of talents are individuals who know everything about the work or need very little training as they can learn quicker than normal workers. This categorisation is in line with Neihart (2000) when he described gifted talented workers as the 'naturally able' with a high degree of giftedness to perform to the best practice (Vialle, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2007). However, it is debatable whether innate talent can be successful without being supplemented with the motivation and training on particular activities (e.g. study, work, sport) (Abbott & Collins, 2004; Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993). If such talent exists, it will probably not be surprising that individuals who satisfy this criterion are hard to find in any walk-of-life, and more-so within this domain of work. Therefore, talent as the purely gifted was never considered among participating hotels.

Unsurprisingly, talent in the hotel sector or any workplace cannot be purely natural ability. This may be partly due to the fact that individuals need to understand the work processes and also understand the strategic view of the hotel; and this requires time and training. Even in areas where the idea of talent is viewed as natural ability such as education, sports, music, etc. there is still considerable debate and doubt about how it fits in with nurture (Meyers et al., 2013; Vinkhuyzen, Van der Sluis, Posthuma, & Boomsma, 2009).

In conclusion we note that talent within this sector can be acquired through (nurturing, training, education, and experience; and this has to be ongoing. These findings are in line with Gagné (2004) who concluded that talent is “...*developed abilities (or skills) and knowledge in at least one field of human activity...*” (p. 120). Gagné further argued that talent is built by enhancing innate gifts through learning and training. Furthermore,

a study by Howe et al. (1998) concluded that no single person is successful without long periods of studying, practicing or training. Thus, participating hotels are more interested and rely more on talent that is nurtured or acquired. This chimes with ideas expressed by Csikszentmihalyi (1998, p. 411) that “*talent is not an all-or-nothing gift but a potential that needs to be cultivated.*” Similarly, while the western dictionary describes talent as nature, the Eastern part of the world, for example the Japanese, defined talent as ‘saino’ - ability, skills and accomplishment. It sets the position that talent is more an acquired and developed ability.

Therefore, since talent can be trained, it is necessary to set training programmes to meet the requirements of the industry. Also, organisations have to create work environments that are friendly for learning and are adapting to current and future needs. This environment allows talent to use their knowledge and skills to achieve the best performance (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012). ‘Best performance’ is achieved through using a combination of soft skills and hard skills; and thus fits with comments by Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) who concluded that the quality of talent comes from ‘natural ability + mastery + fit’.

5.2.2.2. Talent as more crucial in managerial/key positions rather than in all positions

The other related question was whether all or some of workers can be regarded as talent. According to Gallardo-Gallardo et al, (2013) and Thunnissen et al. (2013) talent is some workers; and specifically refers to high potential in managerial positions. Similarly, this research found that talent among the participating hotels meant some workers those in managerial/key positions rather than all workers; and specifically those who possess the combination of capabilities that fit the organisation, commitment, loyalty, and contribution. Managing talent for these respondents was therefore more focused on employees who meet this profile rather than all workers who are managed under the general human resource management strategies.

5.2.2.3. Talent as the key positions/ high potential workers

The majority of participants considered talent as individuals who possess leadership, knowledge, skills and potential; and who are thus able to use these abilities to contribute good performance for the organisation. Talent will also supplement other available resources in the organisations (Goffee & Jones, 2007; Michaels et al., 2001; Tansley, 2011; Tansley et al., 2006). This ensures that they are thus able to contribute to better performance. In this definition talent is referred to 'A' players in 'A'/key positions as noted in Huselid et al. (2005). The term talent consists of the 10-20 per cent top performers in the organisations that also have a great motivation to work and motivate other workers. The performance of talented workers in this respect is the same as performance categories described in the research by the McKensy Company (Michaels et al., 2001). The workers were classified as 'A players' (top 10-20 %); 'B players' (competent 60-70%); and 'C players' (bottom 10-20%) respectively (Michaels et al., 2001). It is also in line with Ulrich & Smallwood (2012) who defined this group of talent as the top leaders of their organisation (top 10-15 %). It is recommended that the organisation should choose just the 'A players' category and eliminate all the 'C players'; and this is because 'A players' can contribute to the better performance and motivate other people to work (Michaels et al., 2001; Smart, 1999). The participants indicated that when focusing on talent this implies key roles or senior levels like supervisors and managers. The rationale was that talent need to be responsible for keeping the standard high, act as a role model to the subordinates and motivate them to work more effectively. The definition given by Michaels et al. (2001) was similar to this definition, and their reason for focusing on this group is that they possess the combination of strategic mind, leadership ability, emotional maturity, and communications skills. Furthermore, a talented worker has the ability to attract and inspire other colleagues or subordinates and have entrepreneurial instincts, functional skills, and the ability to deliver results. A similar finding of the majority of organisations, defined talent as the high potential and key position can be seen in the study by the CIPD (CIPD, 2006).

5.2.2.4. Talent as high capability

The other characterisation of talent which emerged as that of individuals who are capable. These are individuals who possess the required standard of knowledge and skills, and are also willing to learn and grow in their particular job. This characterisation is also supported by D'Annunzio-Green (2008, p.810) who argued that talented workers are identified as promotable and are valued by the organisation at all levels. In the thirteen century, such talent was viewed as an 'inclination' or 'disposition', and it was the 'will' or 'desire' or the willingness of the individual to learn and grow. Essentially, this view is attuning to the competent worker the 'B players' in the definition proposed by Michael et al. (2001).

The 'B player' worker who has high competence and a desire to do the job was an extremely popular choice among the participants. This might be because the number of workers who fit the 'A player' profile is limited, constituting only 10-20% of the workforce (Chabault et al., 2012; Huselid et al, 2005; Michael et al, 2001). DeLong and Vijayaraghavan (2003) also noted that the emphasis on 'B players' could be due to the fact that organisations cannot afford to hire 'A player' workers in all positions and thus for their long term success have to instead focus more on the commitment (to work and industry), loyalty to the organisation, and contribution of 'B' players. This may be the reality of today's business environment.

Based on this discussion, it can be concluded that most of the hotels regard talent as some workers rather than all workers; and more specifically the view was that talent exists in key positions from senior workers to general managers. Talents are defined as high potential individuals who possess the knowledge, skill related to the job, acquired through work experiences or learning and a great motivation to work: That is, motivation to work for the organisation and perform job roles and act as a role model. Furthermore, concerning senior management level, talents were viewed as individuals who act as role models in order to motivate subordinates. However, some hotels defined talented workers as individuals who had appropriate basic skills to work, and the commitment to learn and grow in the organisation (loyalty) and in the industry. In this respect, talent

referred to all employees. Hotels were more interested in talents who mostly possessed soft-skills, for example, service-minded, motivation, team working, and hard skills, for example, the ability to use foreign language. The focus was more on soft skills.

Therefore, in the context of the hospitality industries, especially in hotels, talent is referred to as high potential workers who work in key positions. This is because these positions can assist, coach, act as a role model for their subordinates to work well, and to meet the hotel goal. These findings are in-line with Phillips and Roper (2009, p.7) who indicated that “*talent (is) narrowly defined as a core group of leaders, technical experts and other key contributors*”; and that respect implies that not all workers can be talent. Particularly, those in key positions with high potential were more popularly viewed as talented workers among the respondents.

While talent within participating hotels mainly implied some workers rather than all work, the literature review indicated that focusing on some workers may send the wrong signal to other employees. The other workers might wrongly take that to imply that they are not important to the organisation (Silzer and Church, 2010, p. 220). The other danger might be that of bias; and the organisation may miss some workers who could potentially contribute significantly in the future. These ‘missed’ workers might grow disillusioned and therefore leave the organisation because they are excluded from career opportunities (Silzer and Church, pp. 220-221). However, Horowitz (2011) takes almost the opposite view, and sees talent as the source of problems. His view is that having talent can reduce the performance in the organisation because they misbehave in some cases (e.g. complaining constantly, rebelling); and his recommendation is that any talent who misbehaves has to be fired rather than kept in the organisation. The other argument is that some talents stop trying once they have been labelled as such.

This research indicated that there are more benefits than drawbacks for the hotel in having talent. Organisations need to define and identify talent in order to link it with staff decisions, investments in training and development, and compensations and rewards (Mäkelä et al., 2010). Therefore, since talent within participating hotels referred to those with high potential/high performance in key positions, these findings are similar

to the study by Scott (2012). The study advocates rewards for professionals, primarily mid-to-senior professionals like Worldat-Work members or Hay Group registered website users. As a result, organisations have to invest heavily in developing talent; and this is evident in that ‘home grown’ talent is more preferred through ‘building talent pipelines.’ Similarly, the other interesting findings are that hotels were more likely to develop their own talents in order to have the talent who understand the organisational values and ethos (learns and grows). With regards to the likely threats of AEC (the single market scheme), the respondents believed that having ‘home grown talent’ would drive and assist them to remain competitive.

5.2.2.5. Talent is context dependent rather than transferable

In the previous section, it was noted that the participating hotels rely heavily on ‘home grown talent’. This was driven by the view that talent can be trained. The researcher also concluded that talent within the context of the Thai hotel is more concerned with high potential people in ‘key positions’ than other positions. However, we have also seen that the participants see a combination of attributes and qualities as constituting talent. This therefore indicates that talent in this context essentially refers to the ‘position’ as well as their characteristics. The question here is whether talent can be brought from outside or whether it needs to be grown from within the organisation. That is, the question is whether talent is context dependent or transferable.

Regarding the idea of context dependency, that is compliance with the organisation’s conditions (e.g. appropriate and adequate training program) was viewed as slightly more important than transferability. This was evident from the fact that the ‘home grown talent’ is a more popular consideration among the hotel participants, with hotels preferring persons who ‘fit the organisation’ profile. Stahl et al (2012) noted that the definition of talent should be based on two dimensions: organisational fit and talent’s value. Research by Groysberg et al. (2006, p. 92) investigated whether the ability of the leader (or talent) is transferable or not, and found that other companies hire new CEOs from leading companies such as GE — and the expectation is that these new CEOs will

perform similarly to previous performances. However, the research noted that in the long run some of these CEOs may not deliver. This is mainly due to the inability to transfer skills into the challenges of the new environment. Similarly, Groysberg et al. (2008) also concluded that the performance of individuals is dependent on organisation-specific skills and capabilities. Thus for example, when individuals move to lower ranked organisation then their performance decreases for 5 years but if they move to similarly ranked organisations then their performance only declines for 2 years on average. This trend could be explained through the 'Person-Environment Fit' theory which postulates that talent has to match the organisation's culture, strategy, management, and policy (Caplan, 1987). This implies that it is important for organisations to recruit individuals with the right profile who would fit into the organisation's culture. This is also supported by the research of Greguras and Diefendorff (2009), Kristof-Brown et al., (2005), and Kristof (1996).

Therefore, in order to meet this criterion of context dependent talent, hotels have to invest on training and building pools of talent in the organisation. The organisation can then utilise their home grown talent to meet current and future needs (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012). This is because, despite knowledge and skills being transferable, performance may not be as high as it was in the previous organisational context. Moreover, other qualities like commitments and loyalty; especially the commitment and loyalty are viewed as hardly transferable to other contexts.

Despite the above observations, the idea that talent can be transferred was also viewed as important under the right circumstances. For example, it was argued that talent will perform (use their previous experience) as well as in their previous job if they are provided with proper training and education. This enables them to settle quickly in the new context (the hotel) and use their previous experience to perform well. The participating hotels noted that to achieve organisational fit then the 'knowledge and skills' that are acquired in other industries (or other similar organisations) have to be transferred across and applied within the context of this new organisation. This perception is similar to the study of Rappaport et al. (2003) which indicated that because of talent shortage, organisations have to search through the uncommon group which was

the aging workforce in their study. It has been noted that the perspective of transferable knowledge and skills believes that talent can be transferred from different contexts. Indeed, Silzer and Church (2009) indicate that potential talent can be transferred and applied in other domains. However, this requires proper prerequisites like proper succession planning for talent (Meyers & Woerkom van, 2014, p. 197).

Therefore, while the previous background knowledge and skills, and also the previous work successes are vital; these need to be supported by an appropriate and adequate management in the new context in order to fit in the new context style. Alternatively, the organisation can appoint and groom talent from within, and this might help them avoid the pitfalls of mismatch talent. The organisation has to create talent, articulate the brand for talent, assess talent, invest for talent, and integrate talent into action (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012). Thus, the organisation has to be aware of the issue surrounding the transfer of talent from other organisations. For example, talent as a new worker needs some time to adapt with the organisation style. The solution is for organisations to create an environment which allows talent to develop or adapt to the new organisation. This is implied from the results of the research by Kankanhalli, Tan, and Wei (2005) who illustrated that when talents enjoy their work, they can contribute their knowledge to the organisation. Also, the contributions that talent makes can increase extensively if the organisation's culture and environment supports, encourages, and fosters the transfer of knowledge/ ability to their organisation (Calo, 2008).

In conclusion, it is noted that the ability to transfer skills across work environments and apply them within the context of the new environment is crucial. The idea of context dependency (compliance with the organisation's conditions e.g. appropriate & adequate training program) was regarded as slightly more important than transferability. However, transferability and context dependency are complimentary qualities.

5.2.3. Conclusion of the Application of Talent in Hospitality Industry

The conclusion that can be drawn from the results of the empirical study is that the concept of talent is widely applied and adopted (to varying degrees) among the participating Thai hotels. However, it is noted that there are various definitions of talent

that were proposed by the participating hotels. The concept of talent was perceived differently in different hotels and at different levels and even within the same hotel. This is consistent with research of Iles et al. (2010a) and Davies et al. (2007) which indicated that talent means different things to different people, organisations, places, etc. Thus, the different perspectives on the definitions of talent might have been influenced by the characteristics of the organisations or organisational strategy, organisation type, type of customers, and/or the competition situation of the organisation (CIPD, 2007; Iles et al., 2010; Medlik & Ingram, 2000; Tansley et al., 2007). The culture of the organisation has also been identified as influential in how 'talent' is defined (Kabwe, 2011). The CIPD (2007, p.3) also found that "*organisations often find greater value in formulating their own meaning of what talent is rather than accepting universal or prescribed definitions*"; and it appears that the hospitality industry is not different.

There are a variety of terms which are used to define and identify the concept of talent within this area of study. This variety can be viewed as an indication of the richness of the vocabulary within this area of the hospitality industry in Thailand. Meanwhile, this variety can also be pointed-out as an indication that there is a lack of consensus on the definitions (see Iles et al 2010a; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Tansley, 2011). Despite these differences, there is also a lot of commonality and crossover in the definitions 'adopted'.

It is also noted that despite some differences in the definitions and understanding of the concept of talent among the participants, it appears that there is an attempt to align the application of the term talent to the company's strategy and values. This was evident from the proposed definitions of talent, which refer to individuals who possess the sum of capability, commitment, loyalty and contribution. Moreover, they identified talent as the key positions and/or key drivers of organisational success. Thus accordingly, talent is high potential or high performance workers in a key role position who possess high knowledge and skills; are committed and motivated to perform; and contribute to work performance and influence their counterparts as role models. The high performance and leadership will lead to business success. This definition fundamentally converged with the one proffered by Ulrich and Smallwood (2012) who concentrated on

the qualities of talent and argued that talent should have commitment, competence and contribution of work.

Therefore, the findings in this research appear to be in line with the conclusions drawn by Stahl et al. (2012) who argued that organisations cannot merely apply best practices of other top-performing companies but rather that each organisation should align its practices with its own strategy and values. Thus, the definition of talent should be directly aligned with the organisation's strategy and value. Furthermore, the hospitality industry needs individuals who fit into the organisation and brings (or buys) into their values and ethos. Also, individuals who are committed, especially given the unsocial working hours, are needed. Therefore, talent within the context of the hospitality industry would mean the combination of adequate capability, commitment (to work and industry) and loyalty to organisation, which should result in a great contribution to service quality. In addition, the quality of motivation and acting as a role model are an ideal combination.

As indicated earlier talent among the participating hotels referred to some workers rather than all workers. Also, the view of talent as trained or acquired was more popular, and this was evident in the push towards 'home grown talent'. This was also evident through the participants advocating the development of appropriate talent pipeline from which to build their future pool of talent. The participants believed that talent's best contribution depends on the context. Therefore, identifying talent at early stage is important for the development of the talent to fill that strategic role (McCall, 1998; Stahl et al., 2012). Through identifying talent, organisations can plan appropriate investment for the organisation (Boudreau & Ramtad, 2007; Huselid, 2005). The process of defining and identifying talent should be carefully and strategically considered. As Collings & Melahi (2009) noted, a strategic talent management should systematically identify the strategic job roles. These strategic job roles can contribute to the organisation remaining competitive.

5.3. Managing talent in Hospitality Industry

This section discusses the findings on the question of “how talent is managed within participation hotels?”, and also the question of “What challenges, problems and barriers are faced in managing talent?” Effective management of talent is important. It is indicated that talent is one of the most important resources with regards to organisational success and sustaining competitiveness (Phillips & Roper, 2009; He et al., 2011; Huselid et al., 2010). They also suggested that effective talent management can lead to improved co-workers to performance, reduce employee turnover, and increase customer satisfaction. However, managing talent effectively has challenges and the techniques that organisations use to overcome those challenges will be discussed next.

5.3.1. Challenges of managing talent in Hospitality Industry

This section discusses the question about the challenges and problems that the participating hotels face. The focus will be on the challenges that organisations face when hiring, developing, deploying, and retaining talent; and any of the threats associated with the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Organisations have to fight for talent because it is an important resource. According to Phillips and Roper (2009) “*talent is quickly becoming an organisation’s most important asset.*” This will help the organisation to remain competitive (Phillips & Roper, 2009; He et al, 2011; Huselid et al., 2010). This is partly the reason why the phrase ‘war for talent’ became very popular in today’s business environment as they fight for this important resource which is scarce.

According to the participating hotels, the two main challenges that they face in managing talent are recruitment and retention of talent. Out of these two challenges, talent retention was viewed as slightly more critical. This is in line with the research by Jauhari, Rishi, Bharwani, and Butt (2012) who indicated that recruitment and retention are the main challenges in managing human resources; particularly talented workers. Also, research by Deloitte (2005) in which 1,396 human resource practitioners took part,

uncovered that attracting and retaining talent is the most critical issue for the organisations (Hughes & Rog, 2008). Furthermore, a recent survey of 93 companies, representing industries such as automotive, financial service, insurance, manufacturing, electronic, and chemical, by Towers Watson (consultancy company) found that the top concern with regards to managing talent in Thailand was retaining the best talent; and this was followed closely by attraction of talent (Changchit, 2014). This is not a surprising trend facing the hospitality industry as the difficulties of recruiting and retaining workers has long been identified as an issue. Part of the reason for this trend is the high turnover (Iverson & Deery, 1997).

The challenges of recruiting and retaining talent have been categorised into the following: increasing labour market competition; the “Y” generation’s attitude and mobility; hotel location or accessibility. The findings are similar to the study of the Beechler and Woodward (2009) who compared global labour market to the ‘war for talent’. The factors are the global demographic and economic trends, increased labour mobility (e.g. less strict immigration and emigration barriers), transformational changes to business environments, skills and culture (e.g. the quality needed to effectively work and manage in the new economy is change), and diversity (e.g. generation diversity, gender diversity). Similarly, Allen (2008) indicated difficulties in hiring and retaining talent is because of the aging population, globalisation, inadequate educational programs, and a mismatch labour skill with the need of the labour market.

Based on the findings presented in chapter 4, the factors or challenges faced by hotels in Thailand in the recruitment and retention of talent can be grouped into the 3 categories – increased competition in the labour market, the ‘Y’ generation’s attitude to changes and mobility and the location of the hotel and limited accessibility which are discussed below.

5.3.1.1. Increased competition in the labour market

The labour market has become a global market and there is also a general shortage of talent; hence why the phrase ‘war for talent’ was coined. Thailand is no exception and,

in fact, the introduction of the AEC is expected to increase this even more. The increased competition is due to the rapid growth of competitors such as the number of hotels, resorts, guesthouses, etc. This was the main threat of managing talent according to the participating hotels. This was evident from all three sources of data collection (interviews, documentation, and observation) that hotel business in Thailand is in crisis due to competition.

This was not just with competing to attract customers but also competing to attract potential workers. Competition to attract potential workers was cited as the main challenge in managing talent in most hotels. There is more demand than supply of quality workers from which organisations can choose from; and this leads to more difficulties in the recruitment and retention of talent. The shortage of talent cited in the McKinsey (1998) report was based on research conducted in the USA and was attributed to the decreasing working demography in the USA. However, this trend may not apply to hotels located in Thailand. Indeed ‘decreasing working demography’ was not singled-out as concern but rather the concern with regards to talent shortages was more to do with a lack of quality workers to meet the job role requirements. Indeed, the hotels are competing for the shortage of the qualified talent available. Similarly, studies (Hudoyo, 2014; Minbaeva & Colling, 2013; Poldech & Pimonsangsuriya, 2012b; Siow, 2013) argued that in developing countries (e.g. Thailand) the ‘war for talent’ was triggered by the shortage of quality workers. This is in contrast to developed countries where the cause is mostly due to decreasing labour population. The introduction of the AEC will make the labour force more regional and even global; as the issue will become more global, thus stakeholders will have to pay more attention to it. Thus, the nation will have to change the policy on education to enable the growth in the appropriate number of quality workers for the organisations and the building of a talent pipeline may reduce the scale of the issue.

5.3.1.2. The ‘Y’ generation’s attitude changes and mobility

The “Y” generation’s attitude has also changed the dynamics of the labour market. Their attitude and mobility is considered as one of the most important issues by the

participating hotels. We found that the hotels viewed the attitudes of 'Gen Y' talents as that of people who are less loyal, and as more likely to accept new jobs as long as it meets their criteria. These criteria can take different forms rather than merely financial reasons, for example the offer of higher positions. Phillips and Roper (2009) noted that *"this generation has been raised to be independent thinkers by their 'baby boom' parents and have received enormous amounts of praise and cognition and they also see their parents working hard (p.8)." Thus, it results in the unique character of this generation that has higher expectations. For example, this generation seeks a good work-life balance and flexible working hours unlike their parents. Solnet and Hood (2008) also indicated that 'millennials' have different perspectives than the former generation and that they are unlikely to remain in the same organisation. The hotels concede that this age group is likely to keep trying for new opportunities and is characterised as being less patient. There has also been argument advanced by participants that the main attraction for this generation is better pay offers, more responsibility and a better work environment. Besides financial incentives, the participants also cited "more responsibility, better priority and better development opportunities" as the other issues which today's talent needs. Furthermore, today's talents need and desire more work that is challenging.*

From the above discussion, it appears that the challenge for organisations is to understand the drivers of talent in this age group, and therefore bear that in mind when trying to develop appropriate strategies for attracting and retaining talent within the organisation.

5.3.1.3. The Hotel location - limited accessibility

Another minor factor that contributes to the challenge to recruit and retain talent is the hotel location. Due to location problems, it becomes virtually impossible for some workers to access these hotels. Undoubtedly, this issue does not apply to all hotels as most participating hotels were located in tourist area and they are accessible by different forms of public transport. To alleviate this problem, which also arises due to unsocial hours that workers are expected to operate under, many participating hotels provide free

transport for their workers or even accommodation in the hotels' area. This is the reason why it is not such a big issue for some hotels. It was also noted that despite some hotels being difficult to access; they are still able to attract talent to stay.

The researcher observed that some senior level managers are able to stay with the hotel for more than 5 years. During the interview, some of them indicated that they do not want to move to the competitor despite better pay. The interesting reason is that they feel they are part of the hotel, and they have trust in the management of the hotels and feel that they can rely on them. Thus, in some cases location and accessibility is not the issue. This is in contrast to the view of Tymon Jr et al (2006) who indicate that the location of the organisation can lead to satisfaction/ dissatisfaction of talent as compared to the hygiene theory of Herzberg's; that is the limited accessibility of the hotel negatively affects the intention to come and stay in the organisation. In this case, participating hotels may not consider this issue to be as high because other provisions that they offer from the hotel, are eliminating the issue. However, we note that the hotels that face these difficulties need to re-manage the employer's branding and offer the necessary benefits (e.g. transportation).

The main conclusion that can be drawn from Section 5.3.1 is that the main challenge faced by respondents when managing talent is recruiting and retaining talent. This is mainly due to the 'increased competition' in the labour market and mobility/'attitude' of this new generation. Hotels rely a lot on the new generation, and if this generation is 'extremely mobile; then 'talent retention' becomes extremely difficult.

Below we will discuss the main techniques that the respondents indicated that they use in their endeavours to overcome the main challenges of 'attracting', 'motivating' and 'retaining' talent in the hospitality industry.

5.3.2. Recruitment and Retention of Talent in the Hotel Sector of the Hospitality Industry

This research found that there are many challenges in managing talent. However as indicated above, the main challenges are recruiting and retaining talent. These challenges arise mainly due to increasing labour market competition, shifting attitudes of talent, and accessibility of the organisation. Thus, attracting, motivating and retaining talent within the organisation becomes a priority for hotels.

The provision of appropriate pay and other benefits (such as compensation) was one such strategy that was adopted by most participating hotels in their attempts to recruit and retain talent. Furthermore, building strong internal relationships (supervisory relationships) and building talent pipelines (succession planning/opportunities) are also considered highly as some of the common techniques used for attracting and motivating talent. Fulfilling organisational promises (do what you have promised), giving authority and flexibility, building employer brands/ employer attraction, provision of appropriate and adequate training, and recognising and valuing talent's performance were also viewed as important. Promoting and selling the organisation's vision to new and current workers, letting the right people manage talent, and surrounding talent with good co-worker were also viewed as the way of managing talent in the hospitality industry.

The most popular technique for attracting, motivating and retaining talent among the participants was the use of extrinsic motivations such as pay and other benefits. This was different from other studies that consider this technique to be the more important. For example, Gibbons (2006) ranked the techniques for managing talent based on 12 studies. These were ranked as follows: trust and integrity from the organisation; nature of the job; the connection between individual and company performance (the extent to which employees understand the company's objectives, current levels of performance, and how the best contribute to them); career growth; pride in the organisation; good co-workers and team environment; and opportunities for employee development (Hughes & Rog, 2008). Meanwhile, the research by Uygulamasi (2014) found that talent is retained due to: trust of the organisation; overlapping individual targets and organisational targets;

career development opportunities; fair reward system; and challenging and interesting work.

Scott (2012) investigated why employees leave their current employment and identified two main reasons: opportunities to earn more money elsewhere (77%) and lack of promotion opportunities (67%). Consequently, HRM23 noted that at the beginning money and other tangible benefit are effective tools for attracting and motivating talent; although this becomes less of concern once talent has been with the organisation for more than one year. Furthermore, Lehman (2009) concluded that motivating talent is achievable not only through monetary compensation or extrinsic motivation but also through intrinsic motivation such as personal relationship. Thus, pay should be complemented by recognition, coaching, job rotation, and training and development.

5.3.2.1. Pay and other rewards

This category includes the provision of appropriate pay and other benefits/compensation, and recognising and valuing talent's performance (e.g. through awards, certificates, etc.) The idea of providing appropriate pay and other benefits/compensation (e.g. provision of medical aid; provision of special benefits such as bonuses and allowances) to talent was regarded as the most important approach to attract and motivate talent. This technique was used by all the hotels, and it can be concluded that it is the most important and widely used among participating hotels. It is not surprising from the findings, as it has long been suggested that work represents a reciprocal relationship where employees provide effort in exchange for both tangible rewards (such as pay and benefits), and socio-emotional benefits (such as appreciation and esteem).

The use of appropriate pay (and other benefits and compensation) by the participating hotels appears to be in line with findings from De Cieri and Kramar (2008, p. 62). The general rule of payment (and other benefits) is that they are paid in accordance with the quality of work, attitude towards customers, and willingness to learn and grow in the organisation (Milkovich et al., 1991). De Cieri and Kramar (2008, p. 62) noted that "*a higher level of pay and/or benefit relative to that of competitors can ensure that a*

company attracts and retains high-quality employees.” This technique may help with talent retention because research by Chan and Kuok (2011) found that the major reason (90% of respondents) for employee turnover is due to salary.

The view that pay and other benefits are vital is also supported by ‘discrepancy theory’. The discrepancy theory postulates that job satisfaction (or lack of it) arises from the discrepancy between what income an employee thinks they deserve to get and what they are actually getting; and this is also measured in relationship to what fellow employees are getting. Rice, McFarlin, and Bennett (1989) found that satisfaction only arises when they perceive that their contributions and job requirements are aligned.

While the respondents use pay and other benefits to attract and motivate talent, hotels also have to bear in mind that pay alone cannot reduce employee turnover (Lehmann, 2009; Lewis, 1991; Selden & Moynihan, 2000). Therefore, organisations have to be aware that not only monetary payment can attract and motivate talent but that other benefits should also be taken into consideration. This view is supported by Lehman (2009) and Selden and Moynihan (2000) who found that a combination of pay, benefits, and other opportunities are essential for retaining talent successfully, rather than merely monetary benefits. Also, the research by Chan and Kuok (2011) revealed that the second most cited reason why employees move jobs is because of better benefits (packages) offered elsewhere. For this reason, organisations have to be well-prepared to pay and offer other benefits so as to attract and motivate talent to remain with them. This is viewed as the most effective tool for attracting, motivating, and retaining valuable employees (Bergmann & Bergmann, 1994).

As noted above, organisations need other supporting techniques in a bid to supplement the monetary rewards in order to attract, motivate and retain talent effectively (Horwitz, Heng, & Quazi, 2003). Thus, the supporting technique that the respondents indicated that they closely use in conjunction with monetary rewards is recognising and valuing talent’s performance by giving awards and certificates. However, this technique was not as highly ‘placed’ as the monetary rewards. This was despite Bethke-Langenegger (2012, p. 1) arguing that “*employees’ beliefs of a positive talent status reduce the*

intention to leave and rise the engagement level.” This was also contrary to the findings of Solnet, Kralj, and Kandampully (2012) who found that ‘recognition’ is perceived to be very important to the ‘Gen Y’ talents.

Nonetheless, organisations need to acknowledge and recognise talent’s performance. The program should be transparent, genuine, and trustable. Recognising and valuing talent can be achieved through the combination of the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. While extrinsic motivation (e.g. benefit of accommodation) maybe adequate on its own, the use of intrinsic rewards (e.g. praise of their good work) plays an important role in making talent to commit, contribute and stay with the organisation (Lehmann, 2009; Selden & Moynihan, 2000; Tymon Jr et al., 2010).

Based on Maslow’s (1956) theory, individuals need to be respected and to have self-esteem. The self-esteem need represents the desire of employees to be accepted and valued by others. Hence, employees are critically concerned about reward systems and company image. Employees strongly need to have their inputs recognized in the work environment (Prentice, 2013, p. 771).

5.3.2.2. Building strong internal relationships with talent

This category of building relationships is made-up of the following techniques: ‘building the strong internal relationship / supervisory relationship’; ‘putting the right people to take on the role of managing talent’; and ‘surrounding talent with good co-workers’.

Building strong internal relationships, especially supervisory relationship was ranked as the second most important consideration for attracting and motivating talent. In this research, the hotels create a good working environment (e.g. giving scholarships for employees’ children, creating a family atmosphere; etc.) in order to sustain a strong internal relationship.

There are a number of advantages of keeping strong internal relationships, and according to De Cieri and Kramar (2008) one of them is that the organisation effectively gains a

competitive advantage through strong internal relationships. Through building strong internal relationships, talents will feel they are part of the team. This is in line with the research of Gibbons (2006) which found that employees are more likely to stay in the organisation if they have a strong relationship with co-workers. Strong relationships are associated with work commitment (Tymon Jr et al., 2010).

Building internal relationships was cited as one of the commonly used techniques for motivating and retaining talent. This was mostly popular among GM and hotels owners' subgroups. The reason is that these subgroups take a strategic role in managing workers and communicating between departments. Thus, good relationships fundamentally help effective communication. Therefore, they treat talent as family members and invite them to different occasions (such as birthday parties, New Year parties, & Sport day activities). The expectation is that this will motivate talent to remain with the hotel. A study by Gibbons (2006) found that intangible motivation (e.g. pride / good relationship with the supervisor) plays an important role (approximately, four times), when used in combination with tangible motivation (e.g. money). Furthermore, Tymon Jr et al. (2010) argued that establishing good relationships leads to outcomes that are more positive compared to outcomes arising solely from tangible rewards.

Other measures that fall in this category are "*putting the right people to take the role on managing talent*" and "*surrounding talent with good co-worker*". These techniques have the advantage that they lead to a good team-working environment in which talent can grow and learn from the 'management team'. Furthermore, talent can learn from the other "good co-workers" within the team. While these techniques were not used widely among participating hotels, this however clearly indicates that TM is being used as a strategic tool for effectively managing talent. This also shows that it is important that managing talent should be the responsibility of the all managers, and encompasses recruiting, motivating, and retaining talent (D'Annunzio-Green, 2008; Stahl et al, 2012).

Once key talent has been identified, one of the key issues is to manage it effectively. Allocating 'talent' mentors or coaches is a sure way of achieving this. The question is whether it should be the top executive or function leaderships who act as mentors?

Whatever the solution, acting as mentors of talent can help them to contribute their best and stay with the organisation (Scott, 2012).

5.3.2.3. Building a talent pipeline

This category of building a talent pipeline is made-up of the following techniques: *'building talent pipelines (succession planning/opportunities)'*, *'giving authority and flexibility'*, and *'providing appropriate and adequate training'*.

Building a talent pipeline through succession planning/opportunities or creating career pathways for talent is also another approach that was identified by the participating hotels as a strategy that they adopt in their endeavour to retain talent. The use of this technique is consistent with findings by Horwitz et al. (2003) which found that opportunities of promotion positively influence talent's willingness to remain loyal to the current employer. However, the promotion and/or movement of talent needs to be transparent, and talent within the organisation needs to be aware of these plans. Building a talent pipeline in participating hotels is believed to lead to loyalty from the talent and gain the organisation 'ready to use' talent. It was also uncovered that building talent pipeline allows the organisation to build a "pool" of talent, and this "pool of talent" be readily used to cover vacancies that arise within the organisation. The advantage is that this group is already schooled in the ethos of the organisation. Similarly, this study indicated that this ensures that the organisation has talent who fit the organisation's culture. Cultural 'embeddedness' is achieved because this talent is trained in the context of organisational culture (CIPD, 2007; Stahl et al., 2012).

The personality of talent is likely to grow as they are given more responsibility in their workplace. These findings are in-line with studies which indicated that 130 out of 555 respondents in the hospitality industry think that continuous opportunities for advancement are 'key to talent staying for a long time'. The same study also suggested that organisations have to support growth opportunities for talent (Walsh & Taylor, 2007).

According to the above, carefully building a talent pipeline or having ‘home grown talent’ leads to talent motivation and as a result talent commitment and retention. The organisations should bear in mind that the ‘more talented’ individuals there are, the greater the demand for their services and the better their opportunities (Bryan, Joyce, & Weiss, 2006).

Furthermore, ‘*giving authority and flexibility*’ to talent with ‘*appropriate and adequate training*’ are very important techniques. Organisations have to give them authority and flexibility in the decision making process; and this will be naturally dependent on their position in the work force and this is especially true for key positions, that is, managerial talent. The research of McKinsey Consultant company found that “*talented people are inclined to leave if they feel they are not growing and stretching*” (Michaels et al., 2001, p. 14). Similarly, the research by Walsh and Taylor (2007) found that one of the aspects that experts want from their company is to trust talent’s abilities and give them freedom to work with their own ideas. However, the authority and flexibility should be limited or commensurate with the position.

Therefore, it is important for the organisation to provide the appropriate training which can contribute positively to employee retention as it makes employees feel recognised for their strengths, and it creates possibilities to develop their qualities. However, we noted that most of the hotels provide their training based on organisation’s needs (gap development approach) rather than training based on individuals’ own advancement needs (appropriate development approach). Appropriate development is expected to drive and motivate talent; thus leading to commitment and increasing the likelihood of their ‘staying’ in the organisation (Govaerts et al., 2011). Since developing talent is important to the organisations their development programs should be based on the need of organisation and the employee which is not only for today’s job role but to expand wider knowledge and skills.

5.3.2.4. Organisational branding

In addition to the above, organisational branding is extremely important. This entails *'fulfilling organisational promises'*, *'building employer branding/ employer attraction'*, and *'promoting & selling the organisation's vision to new and current workers'*.

The promises that organisations make during the recruitment process should be fulfilled. Among some of the organisational promises that have to be honoured include compensation such as base pay, overtime pay, bonuses, service charge, travel/meal/housing allowance, insurance, vocation, and leave, duty of work, and promotion. The danger is that if organisations fail to fulfil these promises, this may lead to talent being disillusioned and therefore leaving the organisation. These results are consistent with the study by D'Annunzio-Green (2008) which found that good people move around after 2-3 years, if they do not get speedy promotion opportunities as promised.

In addition to *'fulfilling organisational promises'*, organisations have to *'build their brand'* and *'promote and sell the organisation's vision to new and current workers'*. Employer branding can be utilised by organisations in fighting the 'war of talent' as employer branding helps many organisations to place emphasis on how they can be the 'employer of choice'. This should be done to *"promote & sell the organisation's vision to new and current workers"*. As D'Annunzio-Green (2008) pointed out organisations need to sell their employee brand or unique selling point to a wider audience. Through employer branding, organisations try to continuously remind 'potential talent' about them, and make their brand-name recognisable and attractive. This is expected to aid in attempts to recruit and retain talent. Similarly, a research of 4811 professional employees in 28 Indian organisations showed that *"building good reputation of the organisation increases current employees' motivation, morale, and satisfaction"* (Tyman Jr, et al., 2010, p. 111). As an example, HRM15 noted that *"if we build the strong employer good reputation, we can attract any talent to our organisation as talent want to work for the organisation that they can be proud of."* The participants argued that they generally use three types of 'employer-branding' approaches; namely employee

referrals (through current employees), public relation/ corporate social responsibility (building good relationships with all sectors e.g. schools, police, local communities), and advertisements (through televisions, radios, newspapers and organisational websites, newspapers and magazines).

The choice of approach of advertising, updating, or telling the story in order to brand the reputation of the hotel is dependent on the hotel's capacity. Therefore, budget constraint is the main issue in the choice of approach of branding. The target of audience is another concern on building the reputation of the organisation with the main role of employee branding being to simplify and focus priorities, increase productivity, and improve recruitment, retention and commitment (Barrow & Mosley, 2011).

From the above discussion on the techniques of attracting and motivating talent, we noted that the participating hotels employed various techniques in order to attract and motivate talent. Talent was sourced both internally and externally. However, in coping with the challenges of talent retention, the participating hotels paid a lot more attention to the current talents rather than external talents. Extrinsic motivation such as monetary and other benefit, such as cafeteria, free transportation, and free accommodation was considered to be more important by the participants compared to intrinsic motivation such as internal relationship and opportunities, to grow the pipeline. This is slightly different from the study of Chuang, Yin, and Dellmann-Jenkins (2009) which indicated that potential workers in the casino hotels need more intrinsic (work itself, responsibility growth, and recognition) rather than extrinsic motivation (supervision, interpersonal relations, work condition, salary, company policy) to make them satisfied with their work.

Importantly, those developing techniques for attraction and motivation need to be aware of international standards and what other organisation are doing like offering of salary. In this case, the offer of extrinsic and intrinsic approaches has to be competitive and different from the competitors. Organisational branding has to be somehow different from the competitor in order to win the battle of attracting and retaining talent. The introduction of the AEC is expected to lead to more competition (locally and

internationally), and thus branding becomes more imperative (Poldech & Pimolsangsuriya, 2012a). This should be coupled with investing on managing talent.

We also noted that the attraction and motivation approaches start from the recruitment processes, and follow up more intensively when the potentials and talents are working in the organisation. Therefore, we concluded that to be successful in retaining talent, organisations have to be better than their competitors.

In addition to the above findings on how hotels try to attract and motivate talent to ‘remain’ with the organisation, other themes emerged from this research. The subsequent section will focus on two main themes that emerged from the results of the semi-structured interviews; and these are: Talent recruitment and development. We believe that these themes are pertinent and help us to fully understand how the concept of talent is applied and used within the hospitality industry in Thailand. These are discussed below, and the implications of these findings to the hotels are also explored.

5.3.3. Human Resources activities are focused on talent retention

In the discussion above (Section 5.3.2); we note that no single activity for attracting and motivating talent was proposed by the participants as the most effective strategy for managing talent. Rather, the combination of techniques and all human activities are comparable. However, the participating hotels indicated that they pay more attention on retaining talent compared to other human activities.

The first dimension is to attract and motivate both current and future workers. Thus, hotels consider attracting and motivating qualified workers; and this is done during the recruitment and selection (R&S) processes. The R&S process, for example effective human resource planning, validity of selection processes, on-boarding, can influence retention in the organisation. The second dimension focuses on current workers. In this dimension, hotels invest in building their own talent pool by creating talent pipeline and training program for future talent. This is achieved through providing opportunities to grow (promotion) and through talent development (training) — with these steps believed

to positively impact talent retention. Furthermore, all HR activities are also considered vital for managing talent. This view is in line with the concept of talent management which is defined as the tool for managing talent effectively (e.g. Stahl et al., 2012; Iles et al., 2010). Their view was that HR activities could not stand-alone but rather they are linked to each other.

The subsequent sections will focus on the relation between recruiting and retaining talent; and the relation of developing and retaining talent. We also conclude that human resources activities are associated with talent retention among the participating hotels.

5.3.3.1. Relation of talent retention with recruitment and selection

One of the main findings in this research is that ‘talent retention’ is a function of the ‘recruitment’ approach adopted. The participants regarded recruitment (both internal and external recruitment) of talent as important, and as having a direct impact on the retention of talent. It is widely acknowledged that voluntary staff turnover is very expensive (including time, money, and other resources) (Allen, 2008). Therefore ensuring that talent is effectively retained becomes a priority. Also, an attempt to replace or recruit talent (e.g. time for interview, training, hiring inducements) is an expensive exercise. This might partly explain why organisation pay a lot attention to the recruitment process, so as to ensure that they get the right talent who fits to the job and organisational culture, and wants to learn and grow in the organisation. Some of the approaches that were identified included human resource planning, employer branding, and, job descriptions and specifications.

The idea of focusing on recruitment and selection processes is in line with recommendations from researchers such as Barrick and Zimmerman, (2005, 2009) and Reese (2005). These recommended the use of recruitment and selection processes to ensure that organisations can continue to grow and meet the customers’ needs (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2013). Beaumont (1993) suggested that recruitment and selection have become more important in recent times due to demographic and labour market trends. Organisations put more emphasis on attracting

talent that fits into the teamwork canvas, and thus contribute to effective work. An effective recruitment and selection can help the organisations to recruit candidates who best fit the organisational characteristics and values (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991). Moreover, it is presumed that effective R&S processes can get the organisation the right talent who are committed and can be retained in the organisation (Barick & Zimmerman, 2005, 2009; Reese, 2005).

Recruitment and selection process is a long process which starts from the human resource planning; sourcing the required workers, selection process, and on-boarding (induction). It is noted that the selection processes, is by far the most important step. This is demonstrated by the fact that organisations want the best-fit individuals for the job (based on the job description and person specification). Hotels have to pay attention on the whole process of selection; and this starts from the initial screening (e.g. resume assessing) to the formal selection processes (e.g. interview). The key is finding individuals who meet these criteria: person–job fit, person–organisation fit, and person–workgroup fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Kristof, 1996; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999; Werbel & Johnson, 2001).

This research uncovered that in addition to the above, within this area there is a requirement for the person–industry fit quality. Therefore, knowledge, skills, and abilities (competence) should be used to evaluate person–job fit. Also, values and needs should be used to assess person–organisation fit. Interpersonal attributes and broad-based proficiencies should be used to assess person–workgroup fit. The recruitment assessors have to be consistent in their selection criteria. More importantly, the decision-making also needs to be correct and transparent. In this research respondents indicated that this was achieved through evaluator/assessor training and triangulation of making decision. In this case, for managerial talent, the decision-making triangulation is based on using different management positions — human resource managers, department managers and/or general managers/owners. However, the examples of good practice in some hotels the patronage system was unavoidable when relatives of top-level managers are selected without due consideration of their abilities, qualities or experience. This

patronage system may lead to other workers feeling 'cheated' and thus affect their overall work performance.

Formal assessment is a fundamental aspect of choosing those who 'fit' the profile of the organisation. In this case, interviews were the most popular technique to evaluate the attitude, behaviour, and knowledge of candidates in order to fill vacant positions. While conducting interviews, assessors use this as an opportunity to promote and tell the story of the hotel; and this is expected to motivate talent to stay with the organisation.

The respondents also indicated that they use written tests; but this was mostly only to test English language skills.

Profile 'fit' was also established through background checks. This was based on the previous work, and in particular the hotels were more interested in previous work performances and behaviour within the organisation. Previous background checks have been widely used. According to Barick and Zimmerman (2005, 2009), this helps reduce future voluntary turnover. Within the participating hotels the use of bio-data (background check) was slightly different because they did not check the number of friends and family members who are already working in the organisation. However, more interestingly the only exception was that some hotels were 'wary' of couples or siblings working together due to fears about dishonesty, believing that couples/siblings might collude to defraud the organisation. This was almost contrary to findings of Barick and Zimmerman (2005, 2009) which suggested that referrals by other employees or friends already working in the organisation greatly improve talent retention. The hotels may need to adopt this suggestion in order to reduce turnover.

It is noted that effective recruitment can help the organisation to choose the right workers; who will ultimately stay with the organisation for a long time. This should be based on criteria such as person–job fit, person–organisation fit, person–workgroup fit, and person–industry fit. Interpersonal attributes and broad-based proficiencies should be used to assess person–workgroup fit. It is anticipated that if organisations choose talented workers who fit the organisation, fit the workgroup, fit the job, and fit with the

industry then they are more than likely to choose to stay with the organisation. Thus, we concluded that “*concerning retention, an organisation ought to be very selective on its hiring process of employing employees with noticeable commitment from the beginning*” (Vasquez, 2014, p. 1). Barick and Zimmerman (2005, 2009) noted that employee turnover is more during the first six months of employment, and this likelihood reduces greatly thereafter; and thus organisations have to bear this in mind. Thus, the organisations have to motivate talent to stay longer through rewards & opportunities for development.

5.3.3.2. Relation of talent retention and development

Talent development was also regarded as important, and was thought to positively influence efforts to retain talent. Stahl et al. (2012, p.25) claimed that “*one of the biggest challenges facing companies all over the world is building and sustaining a strong talent pipeline*” and one sure way of building talent pipelines is through talent development.

We note that building internal talent is achievable through promoting potential workers to higher level. For that to happen smoothly, workers should be well trained, developed, or prepared for higher positions (Joyce, 2010). This should entail being afforded more career advancement opportunities (Michaels et al., 2001).

A study by Govaerts et al. (2011) found that employees and organisation thought it was very important to pay attention to talent development. The idea is that talent development “*let people do more and learn more of what they are good at ... this will encourage them to stay with the organisation.*” Furthermore, a study by the McKinsey Consultancy company found that 57% of key managers intend to leave the company in the next two years due to lack of learning opportunities, and 69% due to lack of career advancement opportunities.

Thus, the participating hotels considered training and promotion (career advancement opportunities) as extremely important to build their ‘home grown talent’. Building talent through the pipeline by giving the opportunities for talent to learn and grow was also

highly valued within the participating hotels. These findings are in-line with a research which found that companies like P&G (a multinational company) are able to attract 600,000 applicants worldwide by emphasising opportunities for long-term career and internal promotions (Stahl et al., 2012, p. 30). This is to ensure that the organisation attracts the talent who wants to grow within the organisation. We also noted that the organisations employed more 'gap approaches' (used when there is a lack of skills related to the work) than 'appropriate approaches' (offering more room to grow/ adding and developing more strength and talent) in order to develop talent. This approach increases the motivation of talent but we believe that organisations should allow more 'appropriate approaches' to the talent.

Building strong talent pipelines is achievable through effective training program and promotion opportunities as we have discussed in Section 5.3.2.3. Specially designed training programs are run at appropriate times but some organisations even allowed workers to request more training if they want. The provision to request skills improvement training was only available in chain hotels; since their staff development budgets were fairly bigger. Thus, the ability of talent development is depended on the strategy of the individual organisations.

Furthermore, the participants noted that no-matter how good talent is, they have to learn and adapt to their new organisation style. This also makes talent see that the organisation regards them as important and valued resources within the organisation.

In conclusion, it is noted from the participants that talent recruitment, selection, and talent development are considered as important aspects which help organisations with their talent retention endeavours. Evidently, no single HR activity can stand alone but rather all of them have to be linked to each other with the ultimate aim of meeting the goals of the organisation.

5.3.4. Conclusion of managing talent

From the discussion above, we conclude that the participating hotels pay more attention to extrinsic methods (such as, using competitive pay and other benefit) so to attract talent. While this might not be unique to developing countries, the researcher observes that within the context of the hospitality in Thailand this might be mostly ‘driven and motivated’ by the fear of losing their ‘best workers’ to other AEC countries. Indeed, these findings are consistent with the research by Horwitz, Heng, and Quazi (2003) who found that talent in South-East Asian are more attracted; motivated; and as the result intend to stay with the organisation longer because of competitive pay packages. However, the researcher would have anticipated (researcher’s general perception about Thai hotels) that most would have focused on the use of intrinsic motivation (such as building strong relationship, building talent pipeline). This appears to fit perfectly with the Thai culture and the teachings of Buddhism.

In addition, relationships in the organisation (support from the management) and the opportunity to learn and grow are also comparatively important. Thus, effective talent retention is achieved through complimentary efforts such as: offering competitive pay package; giving the opportunities for development; providing challenge work; and management support (Horwitz et al., 2003; Tymon Jr et al., 2010). Building the reputation of organisation and offering management support also create a long-term motivation that can lead to the willingness to ‘contribute and stay in the organisation’ (Tymon Jr et al., 2010).

The participating hotels stated that recruitment and retention of talent are the two main challenges that they face. However, in practice, the main goal of attracting and motivating talent is to retain the best in the organisation. Consequently, the participants linked talent recruitment and development with talent retention.

Additionally, this research found that in order to retain talent the combination of HR activities (e.g. recruitment and selection, training and development, building talent pipeline, motivation) are considered. It is consistent with the research of Stahl et al

(2012) identified is as the 'internal consistency' where effective talent management need to be focused (invest) at all HR function.

The results suggest that for the short-term and long-term success, the organisation should invest in developing and retaining talent. Building 'their own' talent pools ensures that these workers have a good background understanding of the organisation's direction (grown as the hotel's style); and this is expected to lead to greater motivation of talent to stay with the organisation. The choice of technique for attracting, motivating, and retaining talent is a function of the organisation's culture, strategies, goals, and economic situation.

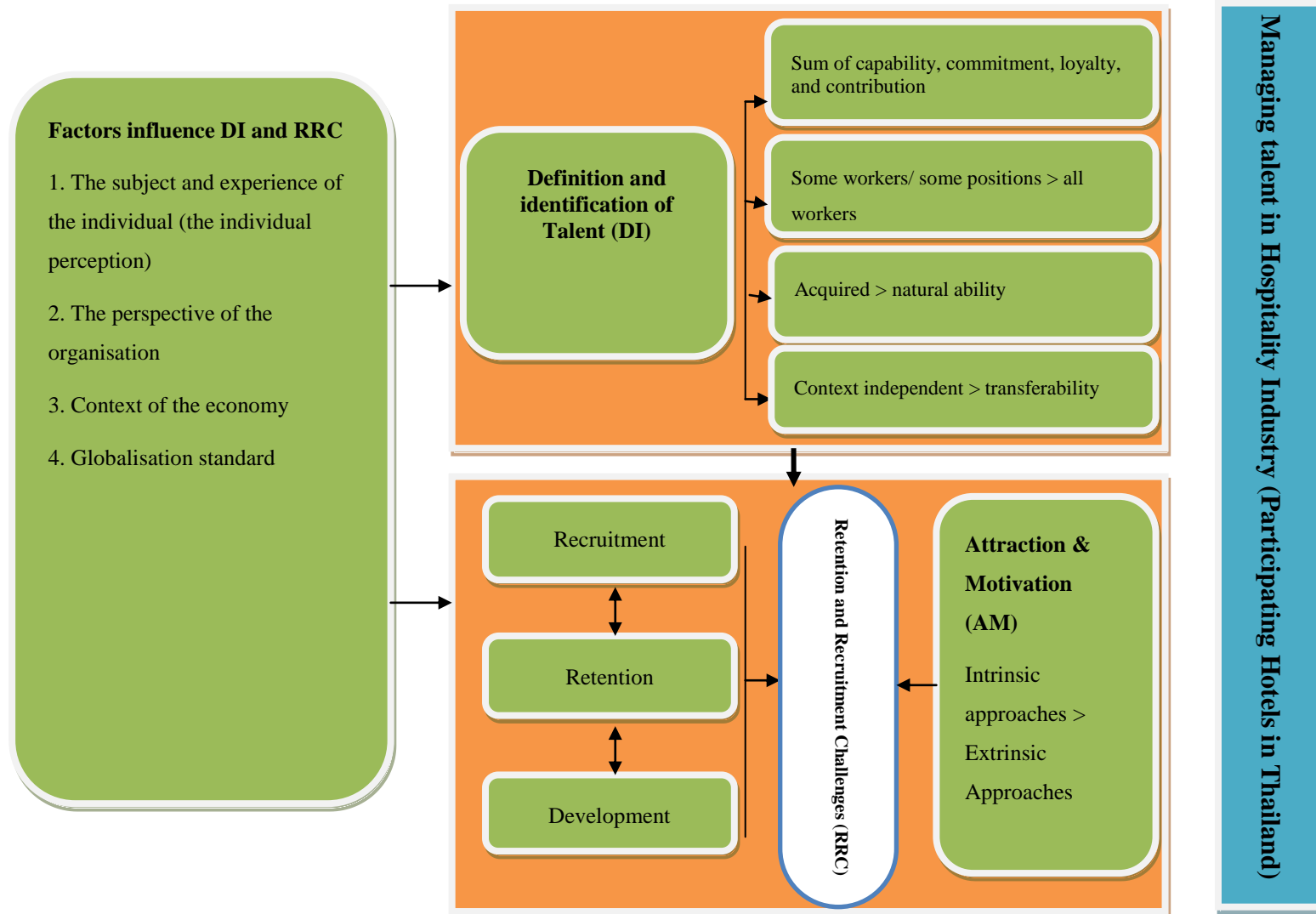


Figure 5.1: Conclusion of the application of talent and managing talent in hospitality industry

5.4. Summary of Chapter 5

The research investigated how the concept of talent applies in the hospitality industry. The participants to the research were hotels that are members of the Thai Hotel Association (THA). The research specifically investigated how the hotels define and identify talent within the industry (that is, how they identify the quality of talent). In addition, the research investigated how they manage talent, specifically talent retention and challenges that arise thereof. The findings from the research were presented in Chapter 4; and this chapter presents analysis and discussion of the empirical findings. A summary of the findings on the application of concept of, and managing talent are presented in Figure 5.1.

Regarding the definition and identification of talent, the research uncovered that generally the concept of talent is widely known and used to refer to individuals who have high potential and high performance. This may seem not different from other definitions of the concept and term definition of talent. However, when we look at the quality required of talent in detail it becomes apparent that ‘special qualities’ are needed of talent in the participating hotels; and this is because this industry differs somehow from other industries.

The following conclusions can be drawn:

- The participants identified the qualities of talent workers as individuals who possess the sum of capabilities, commitment, loyalty, and contribution. Within the context of participating hotel, the capabilities required of key talent mainly focused on soft skills more than hard skills. .
- Also, it was noted that talent is defined and identified based on acquired (mastery) skills more than pure natural ability.
- Talent refers to some workers/ positions than all workers.
- The context is more important in the definition of talent compared to transferability.

The research indicated that the participants used different techniques in a bid to cope with the main challenge, which is talent retention. They use the following:

- The Thai hospitality industry particularly used mainly extrinsic (compared to intrinsic) approaches in attracting and motivating talent to come and stay in the organisation. However, combinations of both are highly suggested by most participants, while in the literature review we noted that the nature of the hospitality industry also plays an important role.
- All the HR activities (internal consistency) were focused on the main goal of talent retention. That is, to be able to achieve effective talent retention, the organisation have to link their recruitment and selection; and talent development and plan.

The research also found that the definition and management of talent within the Thai hospitality industry are influenced mainly by:

- The subject and experiences of the individual (the individual perception);
- The perspective of the organisation (e.g. policy, value, goal, culture, strategy), especially the national culture ;
- Economic context (e.g. economy situation, labour market). In the case of Thailand there is lack of quality workers and this will be exacerbated by the introduction of AEC. Also, globalisation and the need to offer high quality services are influencing organisations to adapt. The ability to adapt enables organisations to meet international standards needed to provide quality services.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter provides the conclusions or summary of research findings, and offers recommendations. It also discusses the contribution of the research; and this is examined in terms of contribution to literature, contribution to methodology, contribution to the policy setting, and contribution to practice. It further highlights the research limitations, offers recommendations for future research, and also offers the researcher's reflections about this research.

6.2. Conclusion of Research Findings

This section summarises the findings of the empirical research which investigated the application of the concept of talent within the hospitality industry in Thailand; especially in light of the introduction of AEC (ASEAN Economic Community). The aim of AEC was to introduce the free market within the ASEAN members. The main data collection method for this research is semi-structured interviews, and it is supplemented by observations and documentations. The participants to the research are 4 and 5 star hotels which were members of the Thai Hotel Association (THA). This subgroup was chosen because it is the main association of Thai hotels. The conclusions from the findings are linked to the research objectives. They are illustrated and explained through the research objectives below.

6.2.1. Objective 1: To critically investigate how the concept of talent is applied in the hospitality industry

The three main research questions that were answered based on this objective were: (1) How is talent defined amongst the participating hotels? (2) What criteria are used to identify talented workers, and (3) What are the factors which influence how talented workers are identified? Why?

The conclusion that can be drawn from the findings of the empirical study is that the concept of talent is widely applied and adopted (to varying degrees) among the participating Thai hotels. It also appears that there is an attempt to align the application of the term to the company's strategy and values, and thus talent within the context referred to key positions (or key driver) of organisational success. Therefore, the results appear to be in line with the conclusions drawn by Stahl et al. (2012), which indicated that organisations cannot just 'superimpose' other top-performing companies' best practices to their own situation, but rather that each organisation should align its practices with its strategy and values. Therefore, the results appear to be in line with the conclusions drawn by Al Ariss et al. (2014) who noted that: "*as a general conclusion, results suggest that firms avoid simply mimicking the practices of other top-performing companies. Rather, each firm should align its TM practices with its strategy and values p. 174*". Thus, the definition of talent needs to be directly aligned with the organisation's strategy and value. Furthermore, the hospitality industry needs individuals who fit in the organisation and buys into their values and ethos. In addition, commitment to work and industry (e.g. given the unsocial working hours) and loyalty (e.g. willing to learn and grow in the same organisation) are needed. Talent within the context of hospitality industry means the combination of adequate capability, commitment (to work and the industry) and loyalty (to the organisation); and this will be expected to improve the customer service. The keys findings are depicted below.

- The concept of talent is widely used and applied in the hospitality industry (more details are in Section 4.3.1)
- Talent is defined as the sum of capability, commitment (to work and the industry), loyalty (to the organisation), and contribution (more details are in Section 4.3.2)
- Talent is the combination of natural ability and nurture (acquired skills); but in fact it is more an acquired ability rather than pure natural ability (more details are provided in Section 4.3.3)
- Talent is more managerial/key positions rather than all workers (more details are provided in Section 4.3.4)

- Talent is slightly more context dependent rather the transfer of previous skills. However, transferability and context dependency are complimentary qualities. (more details are in Section 4.3.5)

The Thai hospitality industry needs talented individuals who fit in the organisation and buys into their values and ethos. Furthermore, they need individuals who are committed especially given the unsocial working hours and ‘highly-demanding’ customers. In addition, they have to show their potential/ or performance — potential or performance within work roles, to the co-workers, and to organisations. Accordingly, the participating hotels define and identify talent based on the hotel’s strategies, and these represent the individuals’ attitude and economic situation.

6.2.2. Objective 2: To critically evaluate how participating hotels manage talents

This section summarises the findings on the question of how participating hotels manage talent. The section also considers two other research questions: What are challenges in managing talent? How do participating hotels within THA cope with these challenges? In general, the research uncovered the following:

- The main challenges in managing talent within participating hotels were recruiting and retaining talent. (more details are in Section 4.4)
- The participating hotels used more of extrinsic approaches rather than intrinsic approaches in attracting and motivating talent; and in coping with the issue of recruiting and retaining talent. Inevitably hotels used combinations of both approaches, and this is imperative for attracting and motivating talent to stay in the hotels (more details are provided in Section 4.5).
- The participating hotels associated human resources activities with talent retention (more details in Section 4.6).

The main challenge facing organisations is to attract and motivate talent. The indications are that they use mostly extrinsic approaches (e.g. pay and other benefits). However, the organisations have to bear in-mind that this is not the best approach to attracting and motivating talented individuals. Thus the use of intrinsic approaches (e.g. building internal relationships, offering opportunities to learn and grow, etc.) should also be seriously considered (Al Ariss et al., 2014). Consistency in managing talent is important

for effectively managing talent (talent management) as noted by, for example, Michaels et al. (2001) and Stahl et al. (2012).

6.3. Contribution and implications

The findings of this research contributes to knowledge about the concept of talent and talent management, especially how talent is defined and identified in the hospitality industry. Also, practitioners and researchers can apply this conceptualisation of the term to describe talent within similar settings, for example restaurants and hotels in the hospitality industry or in service sectors where the core nature of the work is similar. Also, this may enable the government and education policies to prepare talent for the hospitality industry in order to remain competitive. However, talent in other industries may need to be studied before generalising and applying the concept to a much wider range of organisations. Furthermore, once talent has been defined and identified then researchers and practitioners should consider how it should be appropriately managed, for example talent acquisition and talent retention, etc. Therefore, this research also explored talent management strategies; and in particular focused on talent attraction and motivation strategies in the Thai hospitality industry.

The research made contributions towards four main areas of study, and these are discussed below.

6.3.1. Contribution to the Body of Existing Literature

The findings of this research contribute to the literature on the concept and theory of talent management and, in particular, the definition of talent and talent management. The contributions to the literature are explained below.

6.3.1.1. Talent in the Hospitality Industry

This section concludes how the concept of talent applies in hospitality industry, especially in the context of Thailand; and was discussed within the context of the

introduction of AEC (which is expected to create more competition among the members of ASEAN nations).

6.3.1.1.1 The concept of talent is widely used and applied in the hospitality industry

Even though there have been research studies on talent management for more than a decade, the literature review revealed that the definitions of talent are still vague and there is confusion (e.g. Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Nijs et al., 2014; Thunnissen et al., 2014; Silzer & church, 2010). This confusion around the definition of talent negatively affects the talent management strategies that are adopted. Part of the reason for the confusion is the general lack of empirical study and investigation into how the concept of 'talent' is applied in the hospitality industry and particularly within hotel sector. There are very few studies, for instance, Baum, 2008; Hughes & Rog, 2008; and Nzonzo and Chipfuva (2013) which focus on managing talent based on talent management, and also on the factors which affect the management of talent especially in the hotel sector. More specifically, fewer studies evaluate how 'talented workers' are managed within the context of the hospitality industry in Southeast Asia and none focused extensively on the Thai hotel sector. For example, Lehmann (2009) studied the management of talent in service industry, focusing on Malaysia and Thailand, while Piansoongnern et al. (2011) studied talent management in the Thai cement company. Similarly, Poocharoen et al. (2013) focused on talent management in the public sector in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia.

The hotel sector relies heavily on unskilled workforce and is labour intensive (Baum, 1993, 2008; Duncan et al., 2013; Price, 1994), and this is particularly more-so in developing economies such as that of Thailand. Within such environments the questions about talent and the identification of talent arise thereof, and there is a need to confirm that the concept of talent can be employed in this industry. If so, what definition(s) of talent apply to this industry?

Therefore, the findings of this research are expected to add to the body of literature in knowledge of talent management and specifically to defining talent and managing talent in the domain of hospitality industry in Thailand.

Furthermore, the lack of precise definitions of the concept of talent may be hindering the utilisation of talent management strategies. Therefore, the concept of talent needs to be clarified so as to clearly enable stakeholders to identify who they are going to manage and how they can manage them more effectively and efficiently. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature on developing an understanding of the concept of ‘talent’. In addition, the study contributes to discussions on whether the concept of talent applies within the domain of the hospitality industry in general, and the Thai hotels in particular. It will also prove to be invaluable and beneficial to scholars of talent management in the hospitality industry. As discussed in Section 2.4.2, ‘talented workers’ contribute substantially to the organisation’s sustainable competitive advantage and growth. Therefore, it is anticipated that focusing on these ‘talented workers’ would help Thai hospitality industry to remain competitive in the face of the threat from introducing AEC.

The research found that the term talent was widely understood by most of the participating hotels (see Section 4.3). This confirmed that the term is widely employed in the hospitality industry, even though the precise definitions varied greatly among the participants. We note that these definitions appeared to be a function of the variables such as organisational culture, organisational goals and policies, the economic situation, etc. Therefore, it is appropriate to use the term/concept of talent in relation to the hospitality industry.

From the literature review, we had concluded that there is lack of consensus on the definitions. However, from the above observations the researchers wonders whether this ‘lack of consensus’ on the precise definitions is anything to worry about or not; and in fact the researcher thinks this question should be up for debate. Thus, for example, one argument advanced for wanting ‘consensus on the definitions’ is that this would help in the advancement of studies about talent and talent management. However, there is a

counter argument which views this as a futile pursuit (e.g. Williams, 2000); and one can even argue that the fact that these definitions were aligned to organisational goals and policies is not a bad thing in-itself.

6.1.1.1.2. Talent is defined as the sum of capability, commitment, loyalty and contribution

In the previous section, it was noted that there was a lack of precise definition/s of what talent is, and that these were aligned to organisational culture and goals. Despite that, it can be concluded that there are shared commonalities in the definitions of talent within the participating hotels with talent being viewed as the sum of competence, commitment, loyalty to organisation and contribution. Thus in the broader sense the notion that there are these shared commonalities might also be interpreted as a 'rejection' of the view that there is 'confusion on the meaning of the term talent'.

Also interestingly, the meaning of talent identified within the hospitality industry and the definition of talent in general for example in the research of Ulrich and Smallwood (2012), which indicates that talent should have the competence to work, the commitment to the organisation, and contribute to the good performance, appears to be similar to the findings of this study. However, if we closely examine the details of the qualities identified in this research study, it can be concluded that this research identifies that respondents perceive that there are four vital qualities of talent. The differences between what we identified and what Ulrich and Smallwood (2012) identified are as follows:

- *Capability* — we identified the capabilities which are specific to the hospitality industry as opposed to general competencies for organisations.
- *Commitment* — we also identified that there should be commitment to the work. This is more-so given the specific characteristics of this industry such as unsocial hours, etc.
- *Loyalty* — in addition to a commitment to work and industry, we also identified that loyalty is a vital quality within the context of the Thai hotel sector. The emphasis on this quality is more a function of religious and cultural inclination among the Thai people; who mainly try to promote the idea of 'bunkhun' (the reciprocity of goodness, showing kindness, giving and obtaining favours). That is the worker should pay back to the organisation after receiving pay and other the

benefit from the organisation they are working for. The specific characteristics of this industry such as the need to solve immediate problems in-turn demands experience. Thus, overtime talented workers need know the industry and organisation well, and that comes from being loyal. The organisations require a person who has the full understanding of the industry, and this ensures that hotels could provide continuous quality of service to the customers with the same workers and in the same environment. Therefore, this makes loyalty an imperative quality.

- *Contribution* — Furthermore, rather than merely wanting talent to contribute to work performance this research uncovered that motivation of co-workers, contribution to customer satisfaction, and contribution to the organisation (work performance) are very important qualities that hotels demand from talent.

Thus, the qualities of talented workers comprise the individual's capabilities which fit to the organisational needs (strategically and culturally), commitment (to work and industry), loyalty to the organisation, and contribution to work performance (organisation, colleague, and customer). These qualities are complementary to each other. It also appears that talent qualities are a combination of soft skills and hard skills. However, more of soft skills (e.g. service-minded, motivation, team working) were ranked slightly higher than the hard skills (e.g. knowledge and skill, computer skill).

6.3.1.2. Talent is the combination of natural ability and nurture (acquired skills)—it is more an acquired ability rather than pure natural ability

The question is whether within the context of the hospitality industry talent is natural ability (gifted) or acquired abilities (learned skills). Many researchers (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Howe et al., 1998; Meyers et al., 2013; Vinkhuyzen et al., 2009) suggest that talent is more an acquired ability rather than natural ability. The literature also confirmed that talent in the hospitality industry is the combination of natural ability, and nurture (acquired skills); and actually it is more an acquired ability rather than pure natural ability. The acquired qualities/skills are gained from experience, training or education. This may be partly due to the fact that individuals need to understand the work processes and also understand the strategic view of the hotel, and this requires time and training.

6.3.1.3. Talent is managerial/key positions rather than all workers

Another finding of this research is that talent is more managerial/key positions (from senior workers to general managers) rather than all workers. The finding leads to the conclusion that talent in the hospitality industry is some workers rather than all workers. The finding rejects the argument of talent as all workers (defining talent inclusively) (e.g. Al Ariss et al., 2014; Davies et al., 2007); instead talent in the hospitality industry is exclusive (some workers) (e.g. Beechler and Woodward, 2009; Blass, 2007, Chabault et al., 2012; Huselid et al., 2005; McDonnell & Collings, 2011; Michaels et al., 2001; Stahl et al, 2012). In the case of hospitality industry, talents have to possess ‘knowledge and skills’ and ‘leadership and influence’ as these were identified as being among the most important qualities. Furthermore, ‘knowledge of industry’; ‘communication skills’; and ‘management knowledge and skills’ were identified as important qualities. Clearly, one of the key attributes which was identified by participants as constituting talent was ‘Leadership and Influence’. Therefore, the conclusion that can be drawn is that talent among the participating hotel refers more to managerial talent rather than everyone in the organisation.

Therefore, we conclude that talents are defined as high potential individuals who possess the knowledge, skill, a great motivation to work, and act as a role model. Furthermore, concerning senior management level, talents were viewed as individuals who act as role models in order to motivate subordinates. This depends on the management structure of the organisation; but essentially refers to ‘all level of managerial positions’. However, the middle level (line managers) and lower level (supervisors, captains) management were considered the most important.

6.3.1.4. Transferability and context dependency are complimentary qualities — but, talent is slightly more context dependent

There was also the debate about whether the ability of talented individuals could be transferred from one place to another (Nijs et al., 2014). Based on the research findings, we thus accept the findings from the literature review. In particular, the findings of this

research conform to the findings from the literature review which suggested that talented individuals have to fit with the organisation (e.g. Calo, 2008; Greguras and Diefendorff, 2009; Groysberg et al., 2006, 2008; Kankanhalli et al., 2005; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Kristof, 1996; Stahl et al., 2012). We conclude that, this is because the abilities of talent should fit with the organisation's profile and talented individuals' values. Thus, talent definitions cannot be separated from the organisation context (Thunnissen et al., 2015). This was evident from the fact that 'home grown talent' was more popular among hotels; with hotels preferring persons who 'fit the organisation' profile. That is the 'knowledge and skills' have to be transferred across and applied within the context of this new organisation.

The above discussion indicates that transferability and context dependency are complimentary qualities. However, the idea of context dependency is that compliance with the organisation's conditions for example appropriate and adequate training program was viewed as slightly more important than transferability.

6.3.1.5. The main challenges in managing talent within participating hotels was recruiting and retaining talent.

The literature (e.g. Changchit, 2014; Cheese et al., 2008; Hughes and Rog; 2008; Iverson & Deery, 1997; and Jauhari et al., 2012) indicated that the current business situation creates challenges in the recruitment and retaining talent. This was also confirmed through the fieldwork, although in the case of the Thai hospitality industry, it appeared that talent retention was the most concerning challenge for the respondents. Some of the main reasons why these challenges arise include 'increased competition' in the labour market, the lack of quality workers, and issues of mobility/'attitude' among the 'Y' generation. Hotels rely a lot on the new generation. If this generation is 'extremely mobile' then 'talent retention' becomes extremely difficult. Therefore, organisations need to pay a lot of attention to attracting and motivation talent.

These findings are not completely different from those of previous studies (e.g. Burbach & Royle, 2010; Cappelli, 2008a; International Monetary Fund, 2015; Manpower Group,

2013a, 2013b) which cited ‘more demand than supply of talent’ as some of the reasons challenges of talent. Similarly, the research of McKinsey Consultancy Company as cited in Michaels et al. (2000) uncovered similar challenges, and consequently they coined the well-known phrase ‘war for talent’. However, we also note that in the case of Thailand the causes for ‘war for talent’ was mainly due to lack of quality (talent) in the Thai hospitality industry; and that the issue of demographic changes is not as acute as in the original research cited in Michaels et al. (2001), which was based in the USA.

6.3.1.6. Talent is attracted and motivated using more of extrinsic approaches than intrinsic approaches to retain talent

The research found that participating hotels adopted more extrinsic approaches rather than intrinsic approaches in attracting and motivating talent. Nonetheless, the combination of both approaches is imperative for recruitment and retention of talent, and indeed all human resource activities are accordingly associated with talent retention in hospitality industry.

Therefore, apart from adding knowledge to the precise definition of talent in the hospitality industry, this research also focused on the strategies for managing talent. Hopefully this provides a basis for effective guidelines for researchers or practitioners to get the idea of how to tackle the challenges of managing talent (recruitment and retention). It is also hoped that the findings will fill the gap of the lack of the concept of talent and talent management within the Asian (developing countries) context. This is a departure from the frequent studies that are usually based on the Western context (for example, the USA).

It can be concluded that the strategy of attracting and motivating talent among Thai hotels is inextricably linked to human resource activities. The process starts from the recruitment stage, and is followed up more intensively when the potentials/talents are employed in the organisation. It is anticipated that the research findings will add to the knowledge of talent management, particularly in coping with the issue of recruiting and retaining talent in the domain of Thai hospitality industry. These research findings are in line with the literature for example, Axelrod et al. (2002) and Stahl et al. (2012)

concluded that effective management of talent is closely related to investment in all HR activities/functions. The HR activities/ functions considered were: recruitment and selection, training and development, building talent pipeline, motivation; etc. The research also found that the hospitality industry ‘uses’ a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to motivate talent, but with extrinsic approaches being more dominant.

The findings also affirm previous research findings by Horwitz et al, (2003) which found that the hospitality industry should pay more attention to extrinsic methods, such as using competitive pay and other benefit to attract talent. However, in today’s human resource management settings management theories such as the motivation theory of Taylor (1911) who believes that talent is ‘motivated solely by money’ (Armstrong, 2009) may no longer be adequate as the only motivating technique. Indeed, this research affirms findings from the literature (Tymon Jr et al., 2010) that the combination of both extrinsic and intrinsic is important; particularly intrinsic approaches such as relationships in the organisation, building talent pipeline, building the reputation, and the opportunity to learn and grow. Good relationships were particularly cited as one of the top concerns in the case of Thai hotels (as indicated in Section 4.5), and this could be more a function of Thai culture and religion, as will be discussed in the section on ‘contribution to practice’. Furthermore, organisations built talent pipeline; and this was achieved through giving opportunities to learn and grow in the organisation. Therefore, ‘home grown’ talent is attracted and motivated to stay in the Thai hospitality industry, knowing that there are opportunities to grow and develop in the organisation. The Thai hospitality industry’s focus on extrinsic approaches complemented by intrinsic motivation approaches (e.g. building strong relationship, building talent pipeline) appears to fit perfectly within the template of Thai culture and the teachings of Buddhism.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that this research contributes to the literature on the concept of talent and talent management. That is the study enriches and clarifies the concept of talent in the domain of hospitality industry, and in particular addresses the lack of clarity in this area as talent can be different due to the nature of work and human resource strategies. The findings will also prove to be invaluable and

beneficial to scholars of TM in the hospitality industry. ‘Talented workers’ contribute substantially to the organisation’s sustainable competitive advantage and growth; and therefore focusing on these workers would help Thai hotels to remain competitive in the face of this threat of introducing AEC.

6.3.2. Contribution to methodology

The empirical research also contributed to methodology. The research filled the research gap in the previous research of the literature on defining talent; which had heavily relied on the conceptualised meaning of talent from the literature (e.g. Dries, 2013; Gallano-Gallano et al., 2013; and Tansley, 2011). Thus, this research fills the gap on the lack of empirical research on defining talent and consequently contributes to methodology. The findings add richness to the understanding of data triangulation; and in particular data triangulation based on the triangulation of methods and using semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentations. Previous research within this area of talent and talent management had mostly used a single technique (e.g. Bhatnagar, 2007; Gallano-Gallano et al., 2013; Tansley, 2011; and Piansoongnern et al., 2010). For example, Tansley (2011) and Gallano-Gallano et al. (2013) used documentation, conducting a literature review to investigate talent definitions in the workplace; while Bhatnagar (2007) and Piansoongnern et al. (2010) used only interviews to explore talent engagement.

Furthermore, the in-depth investigation of talent management will add richer knowledge on the area of talent management. The rich information from this study will guide the hospitality industry to understand and utilise talent management strategies especially in identifying and defining talent; and in recruiting and retaining talent more effectively.

6.3.3. Contribution to Policy-Setting

The tourism/hospitality industry is the one of the main contributors of GDP (16.3 per cent of national GDP) in Thailand (United Nations World Trade Organisation, 2012; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2014a, 2014b); and Thailand is to one of the most

important tourist destinations in South East Asia. Thus, the Thai economy relies a lot on the tourism/hospitality industry. Furthermore, the anticipated introduction of the AEC, which will create the single market within the 10 ASEAN members by 2015, might affect the less developed economies such as Thailand in the fight for the talent. This may particularly be the case with the Thai hospitality industry due to among other things the low wages compared to countries such as Singapore. Also, English will be the official language, and yet in Thailand it is not regularly used. Therefore, it is important for the business establishments in this industry to remain competitive and to run reliable and sustainable businesses. This will be their new 'war for talent'. Remaining competitive would thus consequently sustain the Thai national economy.

It also has to be noted that most research which have been conducted in this area have been based in developed countries; for example the McKinsey Consultant Company based its studies in America. The themes that emerged were the 'war for talent' and they coined the term 'talent management' which is used as the strategies to managing talents (Michaels et al., 2001). Consequently, researchers and practitioners have borrowed these ideas, and used them in many countries. Examples are bound for example in the US (e.g. Michaels et al., 2001); in Finland (e.g. Björkman et al., 2013); in India (e.g. Bhatnagar, 2007); and in China (e.g. Iles et al., 2010). While not on a similar grand scale; this research will add knowledge and understanding on the definition, identification and application of the concept of talent in the hospitality industry within the context of South East Asia. This will not only help the organisations in this industry but also help in creating education policy and programmes to produce graduates who meet current and future needs of the industry; and hopefully close the gap in labour skills, or mismatches between the industry requirements and 'graduates' skills levels.

Furthermore, the findings from this research are expected to guide National and Local Governments while formulating and implementing their education policies. For example, it is anticipated that this will help the Thai Government to improve the education curriculum for Thais and make them ready to meet the educational requirements and the expectations of the hospitality industry. Also, English language skills were identified as the basic need of most hotels in order to communicate with

foreign customers. If Thais are not ready to fill the position, other the workers from other member countries, for example Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines, where English is widely used may take the key positions and the Thai labour force may not be able to compete if they are not properly prepared. Despite the research findings indicating that soft skills competencies were more important than hard skills, we note that in the international market the battle for the labour force and development of the labour on hard competencies are needed and the government will have to pay attention to that. Therefore, education programs (formal and informal) will be the main source of human development and the government (both Local and National Governments) are the main actors who are responsible for curriculum development. In order to meet the needs of businesses and their desire to remain competitive, it may therefore be necessary for governments to identify and define the labour requirements of the most important industry and thus develop the curriculum that fulfil those needs. Therefore, the findings of this research may guide the local government to develop the labour force to meet the organisation's expectations.

The study contributes to the concept of talent, especially how it is applied in the hospitality industry. This may help the government to prepare talent for the industry in order to supply the right workers to match the industry's demand. However, a wider study encompassing other industries may need to be undertaken before making generalisations to the wider range of applications. Moreover, once talent have been strongly defined, the researchers and practitioners should consider how they manage it appropriately, for example, through talent acquisition and talent retention.

6.3.4. Contribution to practice

6.3.4.1. Introduction

In the ultra-competitive world of the hospitality industry (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2014a, 2014b), hotels must ensure that they provide the kind of service that will satisfy customers, and thus encourage repeat customers. One sure way of achieving this objective is to identify 'talented workers'. This is because talented workers are generally

regarded as individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance, and/or the business critical positions that substantially contribute to the organisation's sustainable competitive advantage and growth. The other goal should be to manage this talent effectively. In this section therefore we explore how the findings from this research contribute to these two goals; and in particular the implications of these findings to practice.

As already discussed, it is anticipated that the findings from this research will contribute to theory, methodology and policy development and implementation. In addition, it is hoped that management teams in the Thai hospitality industry will use these findings in their endeavours to manage talent effectively. The resource should help businesses within the industry to overcome the challenges that they currently face, and thus make the management of talent a smoother process. Ultimately, this should help them to achieve their goal of sustainable competitiveness. Since the study focuses on the concept of talent and talent management, practitioners within the hospitality industry can tap into this resource.

The research findings will act as guide to organisations in the hospitality industry to be able to manage talent effectively through being able to clearly define and identify talent. This should result in a clearer direction for the management of talent. For example, on who should be considered to be talent within the Thai hospitality industry? More so, the findings of management of talent will be used as a guide for the organisation in the Thai hospitality industry in order to assist them in recruiting, developing, and retaining talented staff. Therefore, the recruitment and retention of talent can be easier as it is always challenging for organisations (Changchit, 2014; Jauhari et al., 2012).

It has been concluded that the findings of this research can contribute to practice. It has also been suggested how managers can use the findings of this research to manage talent (e.g. defining, recruiting, and retaining) effectively. The contributions are listed below.

6.3.4.2. Assist in talent assessment criteria

The study contributes to the concept of talent, especially how it is applied in the hospitality industry. Thus, the practitioners can borrow this conceptualisation into their management. For example, the findings can help the organisation within the industry to understand the concept of talent, and talented workers within the hospitality industry. The findings can assist the manager greatly at this stage of defining the criteria of talent within the organisation (e.g. human resource planning, recruitment and selection criteria). This research gives guideline on defining talent in the Thai hospitality industry. Thus, for example, firstly the hospitality industry does not need talent based purely on natural ability but rather the competencies of talent in the hospitality industry is more nurture based. Thus, nurturing (training) and the associated budgets need to be factored into the model in order to grow (build) talent who meet the organisation criteria. This is because the ability of talent may reduce from organisation to organisation, as we have concluded that talent is more contexts dependent rather than transferable skills (see Section 4.3.5 for more details).

Moreover, talent within the context of the hospitality industry referred to some workers (that is, high performers or high potential) as opposed to all workers. Thus, the nature of hospitality industry needs workers who have the knowledge and skills, and service mindedness to give the most satisfaction to the customer. However, these qualities are not enough to be called talent, and there is requirement to also have management skills and to act as role models to others. In other words, they have to be able to deal with both worker and customers.

As discussed earlier the qualities required have to be aligned to the business goals. Therefore, managers have to bear in mind that one definition of talent may not be suited for all. It needs to be adjusted (adapted) to the organisation background (e.g. culture, policy, goal), industry characteristics, the economic situation, etc. The organisational backgrounds have to be taken into account while considering the criteria on talent assessment.

6.3.4.3. Improvement of talent recruitment processes

The findings will raise awareness among practitioners about recruitment approaches, and how to recruit their ‘target talents’ more effectively. By using the right approach, it means organisations will be attractive to be potential talent and thus be able to fill their positions with the right workers at the right time. Irrespective of whether the organisation is looking for external or internal candidates for promotion, they have to choose the right approach to reach the target group. The experience that we have learnt from the research is that while the traditional approaches (e.g. newspaper, job magazine, local radio) are being used, none traditional media or social media (e.g. Facebook, Line application, organisation website) could play a very important role. Social media can greatly contribute information both to customers and workers (recruitment of quality workers). Therefore, in today’s world of technological advancement, social media is one of the effective tools of branding the organisation so that it can be attractive to potential quality workers.

6.3.4.4. Improving talent pipelines

The research findings may be used by managers to develop (prepare) workers to fill key positions at all levels. This template can then be used to ensure that the process of building talent pipelines will be smoother. The research established that talent is important for organisations in order to drive them to organisational goals, and this should be coupled with high competencies that ‘fit’ with the organisation culture, needs, etc. The research also established that ‘buying talent’ from outside the organisation can be expensive but also that there are inherent dangers that they may misfit the organisation’s values. Therefore, the organisation needs to set talent pipelines (succession planning) for the potential worker for them to be able to ‘learn and grow’ in the organisation. Importantly, the findings indicated that the organisation needs to share the opportunities of promotion and allow them to ‘input’ comments on what they want to learn or improve. It needs to be a two-way communications on the skills needed to be developed. For example, on the one hand, the organisation should set the skills needed for the worker to achieve the organisation’s goal; while on the other hand the workers

should be able to propose their own development needs (e.g. in the comment box and the comment board).

One sure way to achieve the goal of strong talent pipeline is for organisations to invest on developing (or building) adequate talent within the organisation. That is, organisations have to strengthen their talent pool from junior performers to senior level performers. Building talent pool is important, and therefore organisations need to take this in to consideration and make it a top priority ‘undertaking’ that will help them retain enough talent in the organisation.

6.3.4.5. Improving talent motivation approaches

The findings may also help the organisation to choose the motivation approaches in order to attract and retain talents effectively. Although competitive pay and other benefits are the most popular technique in the Thai hospitality industry, the relationship among the workers play a very important role in motivating talent to come and stay. Therefore, the managers can help create an environment which leads to good internal relationships. For example, occasional informal communication between the supervisor and worker is needed, and activities (such as birthday parties, New Year parties, and sport days) enable closer relationships to be built among workers. Praise and recognition of performance also help the organisation to increase internal relationships. Furthermore, organisations have to fulfill their promises and put the right people as managers of talent. There is also need to pay attention to increasing work satisfaction. The opportunity to learn and grow in the career is also one of the most popular techniques to motivate talent, and organisations have to create an environment where such opportunities exist. More importantly, to motivate talent effectively, organisation branding is also needed; and this needs to pay attention to motivation approaches such as good internal relations, exciting and great development opportunities, performance-oriented culture, etc. These have to be promoted both internally and externally, and thus ensure that the organisation can be the organisation of choice for customers and workers.

6.3.4.6. Build talent management mind-sets for leaders at all levels

It is clear that in order to stay competitive in the economic globalisation then organisations have to build talent managements skills at all levels of management. Moreover, the economic integration or single market scheme (AEC) will lead to increased competition. Therefore, effective talent management will be one of the most important strategies in order to manage talent. Invariably, talent has been regarded as an important resource that contributes greatly towards the organisation remaining competitive. The Thai hospitality industry needs talent, as talent is believed to be the driver of business success. However, the findings (Section 4.4) revealed that hotels are facing difficulties of recruiting and retaining talent, with talent retention being one of the biggest issues. Despite the issue of talent retention, we concluded that many of participants did not have a clear plan of managing talent effectively (that is, talent is inadequately managed). Consequently, they did not have a dedicated person (or resource) who looked after talent, but rather mostly only based it HR activities. Talent management was not based on the overall managerial positions. Therefore, the Thai hospitality industry needs leaders at all level in the organisation (e.g. board members, CEOs, human resource manager, line manager, senior worker) to take part on managing talent (e.g. human resource planning, recruiting, developing).

To that end, we recommend that every leadership position should be committed and passionate about managing talent effectively, and more-so about attracting and retaining talent. That is, talent must be the top priority of the organisational mind-set.

6.3.4.7. Conclusion

The researcher proposes that through being able to clearly identify and define talent, organisations will be able to develop strategies to recruit, develop, and retain talent effectively. The strategies that appear to work in the case of the Thai hospitality industry are classified into categories such as: pay, other benefits, and rewards; building relationships (e.g. building strong internal relationships); building talent pipelines (e.g. succession planning/opportunities); and organisational branding (e.g. promoting &

selling the organisation's vision; surrounding talent with good co-workers). As expected, the strategies adopted among the responding organisations differed slightly based on the organisation's profile and policy; the trend or attitude of talented workers; and the conditions in the labour market. For example, in terms of organisational branding the choice of approach of advertising depends on the hotel's capacity, budget constraint and target audience. Furthermore, in building the reputation of the organisation towards potential/current employees, the priority might be to simplify and focus on priorities such as increased productivity and improvement in recruitment, retention and commitment.

The findings suggest that for short-term and long-term success, organisations should invest in developing and retaining talent. Building 'your own' talent ensures that these have a good background understanding of the organisation's direction (grown accustomed to the hotel's style); and this is expected to lead to greater motivation of talent to stay with the organisation. The choice of technique for attracting, motivating, and retaining talent is a function of the organisation's culture, strategy, and goal; the economic situation; etc. We noted that effective talent management, particularly talent retention needs all HR activities/ functions. Moreover, the hospitality industry should employ the combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to motivate talent. Indeed extrinsic approach (pay and compensation) is being more dominant. Building good internal relationship and building talent pipeline (allowing employee to learn and grow within the organisation are crucial as the strategy to supplement the extrinsic motivation approach (e.g. pay).

The researcher, particularly, noted that building good (strong) internal relationships is a fundamental/root of attracting and motivating internal talent to stay in the organisation. Since talent management is related to recognition of performance, transparent promotion, promoting & selling the organisation's vision to new and current workers (making talent think that they are valued by the organisation) and surrounding talent with good co-workers, therefore putting the right people in this role is important. The view is that if organisations look after the talent well then talent will in-turn repay or reciprocate ('bunkhun') the generosity of the organisation (Kamoche, 2000). Kamoche

(2000) attributes this to Thai culture and religion, which believes in 'Karma'. Therefore, good relationship within the organisation is needed. A good example is that many organisations are using this strategy to attract and motivate talent by building working environments as a family in order to make workers feel like they are part of the organisation. The researcher's opinion is that this is the cheapest way of reaching to the talent's heart.

Furthermore, there is an argument that the importance of this strategy will act as a signpost (notice-board) for businesses, especially foreign organisations that might be setting business in Thailand. It may give businesses 'warnings' and understanding on the art of winning 'war for talent' in the Thai hospitality industry.

The implications of these research findings (in relation to practice) are that organisations need to pay more attention to talent management, more-so with regards to managing talented workers. They should be aware of why talent is highly important to organisations and how to manage it effectively. Within the context of Thailand this implies understanding the culture of Thais and in particular how they are influenced and/or shaped by Buddhism. Thus for example, one of the key themes that emerged on how talent is managed was 'building good relationships' among workers and making employees feel at home within organisations. We believe that this theme was prominent precisely because of Thai culture and religion. Through defining and operationalising the concept of talent and talent management within the Thai hospitality industry this research would help Thai hospitality industry to fight-off competition likely to result from the establishment of AEC (which is expected to create more competition for the quality workers). Therefore, the winner of 'the war for talent' in the Thai hospitality industry and who also manage talent effectively will gain competitive advantage (or sustain their competitive advantage) due the good performance/potential worker. This could be due to, for example, returning customers or good reputation.

Another closely related issue is the potential for brain drain of skilled labour due to the introduction of AEC. Through the findings on talent management, organisations are expected to learn and understand the drivers of talent such the need for pay, etc – this

will help fight competition from AEC and thus stop the brain drain. Importantly, organisations have to bear in mind that having talent is not the only way to win or stay competitive in the fierce market. To be able to stay competitive, the organisations have to set high aspirations and enact the right strategies and performance initiatives. They will have to energise and align all workers so they contribute their best performance.

6.4. Evaluation of this research

The general argument posited is that talent refers to individuals who are highly skilled with high performance (or high potential) which is innate (inborn) to that individual. Furthermore, the argument is that talent is very difficult to find (more-so in the hotel sector), and that therefore organisations should not bother to use the talent management strategies within the hospitality industry. However, the researcher holds a contrary view and believes that the concept of talent management should not only be used in relation to managing individuals who have high potential or high performance which arises naturally but that talent should be able to learn (and thus contribute to high performance). Consequently, this thesis takes the view that the concept of talent management can be brought to any industry. The research investigated the application of talent management in the hospitality industry, and also particularly focused on the difficulties (issues) of identifying talented individuals in this industry. This is particularly intriguing industry given that the nature of work in that it relies heavily on low-skilled workers and that it is customer-oriented. Moreover, within the context of the Thai hospitality industry the objective is to establish how organisation can stay competitive (especially during the period of introducing AEC which expected to lead to more increased competition for the business establishment).

The researcher make epistemological assumptions (valid constitution of knowledge) while investigating the phenomenon, as she believes that the researcher has to participate in what is being researched through interviewing, observing, and reviewing related documentation. In terms of ontological assumptions (the nature of reality), the assumption is that the subject matter cannot be separated and needs to be understood by

the participant. As a result, this research is looking to interpret what is being investigated; and this will result in an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

In experiencing the phenomenon, the researcher realises that each step of data collection and interpretation have to be carefully considered (particularly the planning process). This is because during the first few interviews the researcher found it quite difficult to get the information (possibly due to being very choosy initially). However, the researcher understands that we have to collect what is available and the expectation should not be so high. Furthermore, due to time and money constraints we could not collect all the information which we think might be useful for fully understanding the phenomenon under investigation.

Despite the high expectations (from the researcher) and some of limitations on gathering the data, it was evident from the data triangulation that we had enough data for filling the gap on the application of talent management in the Thai hospitality industry. Thus, hopefully the findings can add to knowledge on the field of talent management in hospitality industry; and inform education policy development and education on the area of management of talent.

6.5. Originality of the thesis

This research is original in that there are no other empirical research studies focused on the definition, identification and application of the concept of talent within the area of the hospitality industry, and more-so within the context of the Thai hospitality industry. Thus, this thesis fills the gap of the lack of definition in this industry. The definitions developed here are also useful for talent management (effectively managing talent). In this thesis, the definition of talents was brought into practice (talent retention and recruitment). Results indicated that talent should be well defined before organisations are able to use talent management strategies in order to manage talent effectively.

6.6. Limitations

No research is perfect, and this research project is no exception. The research and research findings may be only a reflection of the views (or situation) of the participating hotels within THA. Thus, the findings may or may not be generalised from the hospitality industry in Thailand to other hospitality industries in other countries.

The main data collection method (semi-structured interviews) which was used in this research has its own intrinsic limitations and advantages. While the use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain access to core feeling and thoughts of participants, and thus obtain important in-depth information; it nonetheless, requires considerable effort when it comes to implementation. It required a lot of time and labour, particularly in transcription and translation.

Additionally, interrupted interviews were another limitation. Some participants were very busy and had limited time, and consequently their concentration and the natural flow of the interviews were affected. However, in order to enhance the validity (and to reduce bias) of the research results, this research also employed the observation and documentation methods to triangulate the data. This was in addition to conducting a pilot study before starting the main study.

Moreover, the participants to the study were hotels. Therefore, the study relies on the organisation's perspective rather than studying the views of both organisations and the talented individuals. Furthermore, this research only conducts the research in hotels in Thailand, and this may limit the generalisation of the results to other contexts or other industries or countries. Time and money constraints limited the research to the Thai context. The area of understanding the application of the concept of talent and managing talent would have been richer understanding if we could compare with other contexts (e.g. comparing the context of Thailand and the UK). This would have painted a much richer picture of the concept of talent and talent managements. However, as indicated above, time and financial pressures dictated that the project should rely on organisations, and indeed the fear of bias has been countered through the use of data triangulation.

6.7. Further research

Over the recent years' talent management has become more popular and widely accepted to be the most effective strategic tool for managing talented workers. These are workers who can make a difference to the current and future organisational performance, and who assist the organisations to stay competitive. Thus, in order to employ talent management practices, organisation need to be sure that the concept is suitable in particular areas. As indicated in the limitations section, there are some gaps in this area of study and further research is needed to fill those gaps. Therefore, besides research on the concept of talent and talent management in the Thai hospitality industry, further research is considered on the following:

- This research relies a lot on investigating the definition of talent and management of talent from organisational perspective because of money and time constrains. Therefore, in observing this phenomenon, we would suggest the future research to look at the talent management from other perspective; especially in defining talent. The perspectives would be from workers at all levels, customers, experts, educational staff, and professional in the hospitality industry. As the result, it would add knowledge in industry in from wider picture in the knowledge of talent management and thus focus will be on how workers, graduates, and education establishments understand and prepare talents that are needed by the organisations.
- Comparing the talent management in other countries would also be ideal to see the differences on the definition and management of talent. For example, comparing eastern and western contexts (such as the UK) would shed further light on the use of talent management.
- The introduction of AEC is expected to create more competition among the members. More-so the 'free labour movement' is the issue. Therefore, understanding the best way to fight for the best would help the organisation to stay competitive. Thus the intention in terms of future research is to focus more on talent management among the ASEAN nations.

6.8. Final Reflections

In this final section, the researcher takes this opportunity to reflect on the learning gained while writing this thesis. Through this exercise, the researcher realises that she has gained a lot of knowledge and experiences (both theoretical and practical). Knowledge and experience in the area of talent management has been gained through literature review and the field work; and in particular this has been gained within the hospitality industry in Thailand. The knowledge and experiences that have been gained are explored in greater details follow.

Firstly, this research journey taught the researcher a good lesson that no single research is perfect, and also that new ideas or research may confirm, reject, or expand the knowledge in that same area. This current research for example, needs a lot more to research to understand the concept of talent and talent management in other areas. As we mentioned in the previous section (Section 6.7), the area of talent management needs a lot more research and there are always gaps that need research. As an example of a gap, we note that 'most researches focus on the organisation's perspective (and this research is guilty as charged); and the gap is that there is no major emphasis/reflection of employees' views. A more comprehensive research might focus on both, but this might need a lot more time and resources to come-up with a representative sample.

Secondly, this research raises awareness on the utilisation of the concept of talent and talent management, and in particular learning that no-one definition can apply to all situations and across all industries. The lack of such awareness might lead to misuse and failure to bring the term/concept practice. This point was particularly well noted by Iles et al (2010) who claimed that the use of 'trendy talent management' ideas could just amount to 'the old wine in new bottle'. The criticism being that there might be 'nothing new in this human resource management' concept, but we contend this 'nothing new' idea arises precisely when the concept/term is not clearly defined (or identified).

On a different theme, the research acknowledges that working on this project has been extremely useful for personal development. The skills gained here will be useful for

advancing the researcher's career and for developing knowledge on the systematic process of conducting a research. The process teaches the researcher to be patient and being confident on conducting the research independently. Therefore, the researcher aims to develop expertise in the area of talent management (identifying talent and managing them effectively) and develop the knowledge in this particular area. This is a very important quality for her career as a lecturer and researcher. Education and curriculum development will also benefit from this knowledge.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Guide/Questions for the Interviews

Hotel and Respondent Information:

(a) Gender.....

(b)

Position.....

(c) Department

.....

(d) Qualification- level of
education.....

(e) Level of hotel star rating.....

.....

(f) Hotel size – number of
room.....

(g) Type of hotel -
local/foreign.....

(h) Number of
employees.....

(i) Main target group of the customer—which country and purpose of
staying.....

(j) Experience in the hotel sector—number of years

.....

Interview Questions:

1. Can you tell me what you do in your current position?
2. Are you involved in managing talent in your hotel? How? Who else is involved in this role? What do they do?
3. What should talent mean in your hotel? - How is the best worker/talent defined in hotels?
4. What criteria are used to identify the quality of talent?
5. What factors influence the need for those qualities in talent? Why?

6. How might the definition of talent change in response to changes in your organisation's environment, culture, and business strategy?
7. Why do you think having talent is important to your hotel?
8. Which role of work is the most crucial in your organisation?
9. What challenges are you facing in managing talent?
10. How long do your employees stay with the hotel on average, until they leave? Do you know what the main reason for leaving? Or why do some the employee stay with the hotel for long time?
11. How do you dealing with the issues of managing talent talents?
12. What is the top priority of your organisation — how could talent help support this goal?
13. How do you make talent to stay in your hotel? How do you attract or motivate talent to stay in your hotel?
14. Which position role takes the responsibility in retaining talent? Why?
15. What are the challenges and problems in retaining talents?
16. Are there any other issues/comments that you want to suggest or mention in identifying talent and retaining talent?

Appendix 2: Guide/Questions for the Observation

Definition of talent

- Is the interviewee knowledgeable in wide range of working?
- To what extent do interviewees and other hotel workers speak foreign languages?
- How friendly and customer focused is the interviewees and other workers?
- Is there any issue in the hotels? If there are any, how promptly can workers deal with these issues?
- Appearance of interviewees and workers (e.g. outfit, body language)

Managing talent

- Location of hotels – other competing hotel businesses within the vicinity?
- Relationships in the organisation?
- What does the hotel provide its workers (e.g. meal, room for the employee, accommodation, transportation, training, induction)?
- Working environment in the organisation?
- Any priorities for the talent which can be noticed?

Appendix 3: Guide/Questions for Review of the Documentation

Definition of talent

- What kind of people does the hotel currently need? Are there specific reasons for those needs?
- What criteria or specific skills are needed by the hotel?
- What position/role is considered to be most important?

Managing talent

- How does the organisation attract and retain their talent?
- Any challenge and problems of managing talent?

Appendix 4: The Ethical Approval



College of Arts & Social Sciences
Room 626 Maxwell Building
The Crescent
Salford, M5 4WT
Tel: 0161 295 5876

27 January 2014

Rudsada Kaewsaeng-on
University of Salford

Dear Rudsada

Re: Ethical Approval Application – CASS130010

I am pleased to inform you that based on the information provided, the Research Ethics Panel have no objections on ethical grounds to your project.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Woodman
On Behalf of CASS Research Ethics Panel

Appendix 5: The Study Letter



THE STUDY LETTER

To whom it may concern,

Research Title: Critical investigation of the application of the concept of talent and managing talented workers: in the domain of hospitality industry within selected members of the Thai Hotels Association.

Researcher: Miss Rudsada Kaewsaeng-on, PhD student, Salford Business School

Outline of Research: The main aim of carrying out this research is: To investigate the application of the concept of talent in defining, identifying and managing talented employees within the context of Thai hotel industry; and particularly in view of the introduction of AEC. This research will cover locally-owned four-and-five-starred hotels and internationally-owned four-and-five-starred hotels. This study will gather views of CEOs/general managers and line managers (front office manager, food and beverage manager, housekeeping manager) and HR manager in all case studies.

This research will investigate implementation of the concept of talent and managing talent in nationally owned starred hotels and internationally owned starred hotels.

All collected data will be treated confidentially and any reference to any of participants will be made anonymously. A copy of the final thesis will be provided to the Office of The Civil Service Commission (Thailand).

Any queries relating to this research should be addressed to:

Dr. Kevin Kane
The University of Salford
Salford
Greater Manchester
M5 4WT
Email: s.sharifi@salford.ac.uk
Tel: (+44) (0) 1612955092

Appendix 6: Information Letter to Interviewees

INFORMATION LETTER TO INTERVIEWEE

Dear General Manager, F/B Manager, H/K Manager, F/O Manager and HR Manager
ofhotel

I am Miss Rudsada Kaewsaeng-on, a PhD student, at the Salford Business School, University of Salford (United Kingdom).

I am conducting my doctoral research:

Critical investigation the application of the concept of talent and managing talented workers: in the domain of hospitality industry within selected members of the Thai Hotels Association.

The main aim of carrying out this research is: To investigate the application of the concept of talent in defining, identifying and managing talented employees within the context of Thai hotel industry; and particularly in view of the introduction of AEC. This research will cover locally-owned four-and-five-starred hotels and internationally-owned four-and-five-starred hotels.

This study will gather views of CEOs/general managers and line managers (front office manager, food and beverage manager, housekeeping manager) and HR manager in all case studies. This research will investigate implementation of the concept of talent and managing talent R&S and impact on retention in nationally owned starred hotels and internationally owned starred hotels.

- The interview will take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours.
- Participation is completely voluntary.
- Participants are free to withdraw their consent at any time.
- Information and data obtained will be analysed by the researcher solely for the purpose of this study, and will not affect any participants anyhow.
- The researcher will tape record each interview, with the interviewee's permission.
- The researcher will make detailed notes during each interview and use the tape recordings to check the accuracy of the transcribed interview notes.
- During the research process, any material collected will be kept in the strictest confidence and in a secure place.
- The typed record of each interview will be sent to the interviewee to verify that it is an accurate record of the interview

- After finishing data analysis, all the tapes, drafts, etc. will be destroyed to prevent any misuse.
- The final written thesis will ensure anonymity by not using any actual names or identifying characteristics of any participants.

In addition to the direct interviews, the researcher would be grateful to get access to some documentation for example relating to the criteria of defining, identifying and managing talent. This researcher will also directly observe why the particular criteria of talent are being identified, and how the hotels manage talent.

This letter seeks your permission to be involved in this research. Please indicate this in the Section at the end of this letter.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact:

Dr. Kevin Kane
The University of Salford
Salford
Greater Manchester
M5 4WT
United Kingdom
Email: k.kane@salford.ac.uk
Tel: (+44) (0) 1612952239

Thank you in advance for taking part in this research.

Rudsada Kaewsaeng-on, PhD student
Salford Business School
Maxwell Building 5th Floor
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United Kingdom
Mobile phone: (+44) (0) 7447913595
Email : r.kaewsaeng-on1@salford.edu.ac.uk

.....
...

Please indicate approval for your participation in the study by deleting as applicable:

I wish/I do not wish to participate in the study titled : **Critical investigation the application of the concept of talent and managing talented workers in the domain of the hospitality industry within selected members of the Thai Hotels Association.**

Signature:

Appendix 7: Consent Form

Consent Form

Name:

Position:

Organisation/Company:

Address:

Date:

Anonymity - Requested / not requested

I, the above named interviewee, give my full consent and understand that the information I am giving can be used as data for this research only.

I understand that the subject of the interview is: **Investigate the application to the term of talent and managing talent in hospitality industry in Thailand.**

I accept that there are no hazards or risks associated with this work.

I understand that my responses will be kept in the strictest confidence.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time and without needing to provide reasons for the withdrawal.

I also understand that I may elect to provide the information anonymously and will indicate so above; in which case the researcher will allocate a random reference to me and only the researcher will know the name of the original source.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 8: List of the Hotels with Membership under the Thai Hotel Association

No.	Name	Star rating	Location	Type	Number of rooms
1	SWISSOTEL LE CONCORDE BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	407
2	THE WESTIN GRANDE SUKHUMVIT BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	368
3	AMARI WATERGATE HOTEL	5	Bangkok	hotel	569
4	BANGKOK MARRIOTT RESORT & SPA	5	Bangkok	resort	422
5	BANYAN TREE BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	216
6	DUSIT THANI BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	520
7	INTERCONTINENTAL BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	381
8	RAMADA PLAZA MENAM RIVERSIDE BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	722
9	SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	890
10	SHERATON GRANDE SUKHUMVIT	5	Bangkok	hotel	447
11	SOFITEL SILOM BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	460
12	SOFITEL CENTARA GRAND BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	600
13	THE CONRAD HOTEL	5	Bangkok	hotel	500
14	MANDARIN ORIENTAL BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	406
15	PULLMAN BANGKOK KING POWER	5	Bangkok	hotel	430
16	VIE HOTEL BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	121
17	CENTARA GRAND AT CENTRAL WORLD	5	Bangkok	hotel	51
18	JW MARRIOTT BANGKOK	5	Bangkok	hotel	441
19	ROYAL ORCHID SHERATON HOTEL & TOWERS	5	Bangkok	hotel	755
20	THE SUKHOTHAI	5	Bangkok	hotel	210
21	PATHUMWAN PRINCESS HOTEL	5	Bangkok	hotel	455
22	METROPOLITAN BANGKOK HOTEL	5	Bangkok	hotel	177
23	DUSIT D2 CHIANG MAI	5	Chiangmai	hotel	130
24	FOUR SEASONS RESORT CHIANG MAI	5	Chiangmai	resort	64
25	THE CHEDI CHIANG MAI	5	Chiangmai	resort	66
26	SHANGRI-LA HOTEL CHIANGMAI	5	Chiangmai	hotel	281
27	RATILANNA RIVERSIDE SPA RESORT, CHIANGMAI	5	Chiangmai	resort	75
28	DUSIT ISLAND RESORT, CHIANG RAI	5	Chiangrai	resort	271
29	ANANTARA RESORT & SPA GOLDEN TRIANGLE	5	Chiangrai	resort	110
30	DUSIT THANI PATTAYA	5	Chonburi	resort	462
31	PATTAYA MARRIOTT RESORT & SPA	5	Chonburi	resort	293

No.	Name	Star rating	Location	Type	Number of rooms
32	PULLMAN PATTAYA AISAWAN	5	Chonburi	resort	353
33	THE ZIGN	5	Chonburi	resort	959
34	AMARI ORCHID PATTAYA (OCEAN TOWER)	5	Chonburi	resort	236
35	ROYAL CLIFF BEACH RESORT	5	Chonburi	resort	1020
36	PULLMAN KHON KAEN RAJA ORCHID	5	Khonkaen	hotel	293
37	RAYAVADEE	5	Krabi	resort	100
38	CENTARA GRAND BEACH RESORT & VILLAS KRABI	5	Krabi	resort	192
39	PIMALAI RESORT & SPA	5	Krabi	resort	79
40	SHERATON KRABI BEACH RESORT	5	Krabi	resort	246
41	DUSIT THANI HUA HIN	5	Petchburi	resort	462
42	SHERATON HUA HIN RESORT & SPA	5	Petchburi	resort	240
43	LE MERIDIEN KHAO LAK BEACH & SPA RESORT	5	Phang Nga	resort	79
44	DUSIT THANI LAGUNA PHUKET	5	Phuket	resort	226
45	SRI PANWA BOUTIQUE RESORT & SPA	5	Phuket	resort	29
46	JW MARRIOTT PHUKET RESORT & SPA	5	Phuket	resort	265
47	THE IMPERIAL ADAMAS RESORT & SPA	5	Phuket	resort	112
48	RENAISSANCE PHUKET RESORT AND SPA	5	Phuket	resort	180
49	CENTARA GRAND BEACH RESORT PHUKET	5	Phuket	resort	260
50	HUA HIN MARRIOTT RESORT&SPA	5	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	217
51	DHEVAN DARA RESORT & SPA	5	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	78
52	WORA BURA HUA HIN RESORT & SPA	5	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	77
53	SOFITEL CENTARA GRAND RESORT & VILLAS HUA HIN	5	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	248
54	V VILLAS HUA HIN	5	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	13
55	ANANTARA RESORT & SPA HUA HIN	5	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	187
56	PARADEE	5	Rayong	resort	40
57	MELATI BEACH RESORT AND SPA	5	Suratthani	resort	77
58	MUANG SAMUI SPA RESORT	5	Suratthani	resort	53
59	THE IMPERIAL RESORT & SPA, KOH SAMUI	5	Suratthani	resort	141
60	CENTARA GRAND BEACH RESORT SAMUI	5	Suratthani	resort	208
61	SANTHIYA RESORT & SPA	5	Suratthani	resort	54
62	MAI SAMUI BEACH RESORT & SAMUI	5	Suratthani	resort	97
63	ANANTARA BOPHUT RESORT& SPA	5	Suratthani	resort	106
64	ANANTARA LAWANA RESORT AND SPA	5	Suratthani	resort	122
65	SAREERAYA VILLAS AND SUITES	5	Suratthani	resort	50
66	AMARI EMERALD COVE RESORT	5	Trad	resort	165

No.	Name	Star rating	Location	Type	Number of rooms
67	ANANTARA SI KAO RESORT & SPA	5	Trang	resort	193
68	IYARA PARK HOTEL & RESORT	5	Uthai Thani	hotel	220
69	ARNOMA HOTEL BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	369
70	REMBRANDT HOTEL & TOWERS BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	407
71	AMARI ATRIUM HOTEL	4	Bangkok	hotel	592
72	AMARI BOULEVARD HOTEL	4	Bangkok	hotel	315
73	AMARI DON MUANG BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	447
74	A-ONE BANGKOK HOTEL	4	Bangkok	hotel	218
75	DUSIT PRINCESS SRINAKARIN BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	198
76	HOLIDAY INN SILOM,BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	865
77	IMPERIAL TARA HOTEL	4	Bangkok	hotel	196
78	INDRA REGENT HOTEL	4	Bangkok	hotel	439
79	MONTIEN HOTEL- BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	511
80	NARAI HOTEL	4	Bangkok	hotel	500
81	GOLDEN TULIP SOVEREIGN HOTEL-BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	388
82	RAMA GARDENS HOTEL BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	506
83	THE FOUR WINGS HOTEL, BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	327
84	THE IMPERIAL QUEEN'S PARK HOTEL	4	Bangkok	hotel	1360
85	THE AMBASSADOR BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	764
86	GRANDE DIAMOND SUITES HOTEL	4	Bangkok	hotel	176
87	ASIA HOTEL BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	638
88	CENTURY PARK HOTEL	4	Bangkok	hotel	380
89	EASTIN HOTEL MAKASAN BANGKOK	4	Bangkok	hotel	305
90	NOVOTEL BANGKOK ON SIAM SQUARE	4	Bangkok	hotel	429
91	BANGKOK HOTEL LOTUS SUKHUMVIT	4	Bangkok	hotel	248
92	PRINCE PALACE HOTEL	4	Bangkok	hotel	320
93	AMARI RINCOME HOTEL	4	Chiangmai	hotel	158
94	AMORA TAPAE HOTEL CHIANGMAI	4	Chiangmai	hotel	204
95	THE IMPERIAL MAE PING HOTEL	4	Chiangmai	hotel	371
96	PANVIMAN RESORT CHIANGMAI	4	Chiangmai	resort	42
97	CHIANG MAI PLAZA HOTEL	4	Chiangmai	hotel	445
98	GOLDEN PINE RESORT & SPA CHIANG RAI	4	Chiangrai	resort	78
99	WIANG INN HOTEL	4	Chiangrai	hotel	255
100	A-ONE THE ROYAL CRUISE HOTEL,PATTAYA	4	Chonburi	resort	200
101	LONG BEACH GARDEN HOTEL AND SPA	4	Chonburi	hotel	670

No.	Name	Star rating	Location	Type	Number of rooms
102	THE MONTIEN HOTEL PATTAYA	4	Chonburi	resort	300
103	AMARI ORCHID RESORT & TOWER (GARDEN WING)	4	Chonburi	resort	232
104	ASIA PATTAYA HOTEL	4	Chonburi	resort	301
105	HARD ROCK HOTEL PATTAYA	4	Chonburi	resort	320
106	WOODLANDS HOTEL & RESORT	4	Chonburi	resort	135
107	THAI GARDEN RESORT	4	Chonburi	resort	227
108	SUNBEAM HOTEL	4	Chonburi	hotel	222
109	CHOLCHAN PATTAYA HOTEL	4	Chonburi	hotel	573
110	SIAM BAYSHORE RESORT	4	Chonburi	resort	270
111	SIAM BAYVIEW HOTEL	4	Chonburi	hotel	260
112	CHAROEN THANI KHON KAEN	4	Khonkaen	hotel	320
113	AONANG VILLA RESORT	4	Krabi	resort	157
114	KRABI THAI VILLAGE RESORT	4	Krabi	resort	128
115	CHA-DA BEACH RESORT AND SPA	4	Krabi	resort	192
116	RED GINGER CHIC RESORT	4	Krabi	resort	63
117	MARITIME PARK & SPA RESORT	4	Krabi	resort	221
118	PAKASAI RESORT	4	Krabi	resort	77
119	SALA TALAY RESORT AND SPA	4	Krabi	resort	59
120	LOEI PALACE HOTEL	4	Loei	hotel	56
121	TAKSILA HOTEL	4	Maharakham	hotel	77
122	DUSIT PRINCESS KORAT	4	NAKORN RATCHASIMA	hotel	186
123	C.S PATTANI HOTEL	4	Pattani	hotel	246
124	HAVEN RESORT HUA HIN	4	Petchaburi	resort	53
125	HOLIDAY INN RESORT REGENT BEACH CHA-AM MAIN WING	4	Petchburi	resort	705
126	KHAOLAK SEAVIEW RESORT & SPA	4	Phang Nga	resort	60
127	TARA MANTRA CHA-AM	4	Phetburi	resort	88
128	DUANGJITT RESORT & SPA	4	Phuket	resort	508
129	NOVOTEL PHUKET RESORT PATONG BEACH	4	Phuket	resort	215
130	THE ROYAL PARADISE HOTEL (ROYAL WING)	4	Phuket	hotel	248
131	AMARI CORAL BEACH RESORT	4	Phuket	resort	188
132	BEST WESTERN PREMIER BANGTAO BEACH RESORT & SPA	4	Phuket	resort	190
133	CENTARA KARON RESORT PHUKET	4	Phuket	resort	341
134	CLUB ANDAMAN BEACH RESORT	4	Phuket	resort	250

No.	Name	Star rating	Location	Type	Number of rooms
135	HOLIDAY INN RESORT PHUKET	4	Phuket	resort	425
136	THARA PATONG BEACH RESORT & SPA	4	Phuket	resort	126
137	SUPALAI RESORT & SPA	4	Phuket	resort	182
138	ANDAMAN BEACH SUITES HOTEL	4	Phuket	resort	60
139	ANDAMAN SEAVIEW HOTEL	4	Phuket	hotel	161
140	CENTARA KATA BEACH RESORT	4	Phuket	hotel	158
141	PATONG BEACH HOTEL	4	Phuket	resort	245
142	PATONG PARAGON RESORT & SPA	4	Phuket	resort	121
143	ROYAL PHUKET CITY HOTEL	4	Phuket	resort	251
144	SEAVIEW PATONG HOTEL	4	Phuket	resort	141
145	PEACH HILL HOTEL & RESORT	4	Phuket	resort	157
146	ANDAMAN CANNACIA RESORT & SPA	4	Phuket	resort	105
147	IMPIANA RESORT PATONG PHUKET	4	Phuket	resort	68
148	PEACH BLOSSOM	4	Phuket	resort	118
149	PURIMANTRA RESORT & SPA	4	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	17
150	NOVOTEL RIM PAE RESORT RAYONG	4	RAYONG	resort	189
151	NOVOTEL SUVARNABHUMI AIRPORT HOTEL	4	Samutprakarn	hotel	612
152	BAANAMPHAWA RESORT & SPA	4	Samutsongkhram	resort	50
153	NOVOTEL CENTARA HAT YAI	4	Songkhla	hotel	245
154	BANDARA RESORT AND SPA	4	Suratthani	resort	151
155	PARADISE BEACH RESORT	4	Suratthani	resort	95
156	Q SIGNATURE SAMUI	4	Suratthani	resort	123
157	THE IMPERIAL BOATHOUSE RESORT & SPA,KOH SAMUI	4	Suratthani	resort	210
158	AMARI PALM REEF RESORT	4	Suratthani	resort	102
159	CHABA CABANA BEACH RESORT & SPA	4	Suratthani	resort	80
160	NORA BEACH RESORT & SPA	4	Suratthani	resort	96
161	PANVIMAN RESORT KOH PHANGAN	4	Suratthani	resort	72
162	BHUNDHARI SPA RESORT & VILLAS SAMUI,A CENTARA RESORT	4	Suratthani	resort	122
163	IMPIANA SAMUI RESORT & SPA	4	Suratthani	resort	98
164	IYARA BEACH HOTEL & PLAZA	4	Suratthani	resort	75
165	NEW STAR BEACH RESORT KOH SAMUI	4	Suratthani	resort	74
166	SAMUI RESOTEL & SPA KOH SAMUI	4	Suratthani	resort	79
167	PANVIMAN KOH CHANG RESORT	4	Trad	resort	50
168	AYUTTHAYA GRAND HOTEL	3	Ayutthaya	hotel	122
169	GRANDE VILLE HOTEL	3	Bangkok	hotel	220

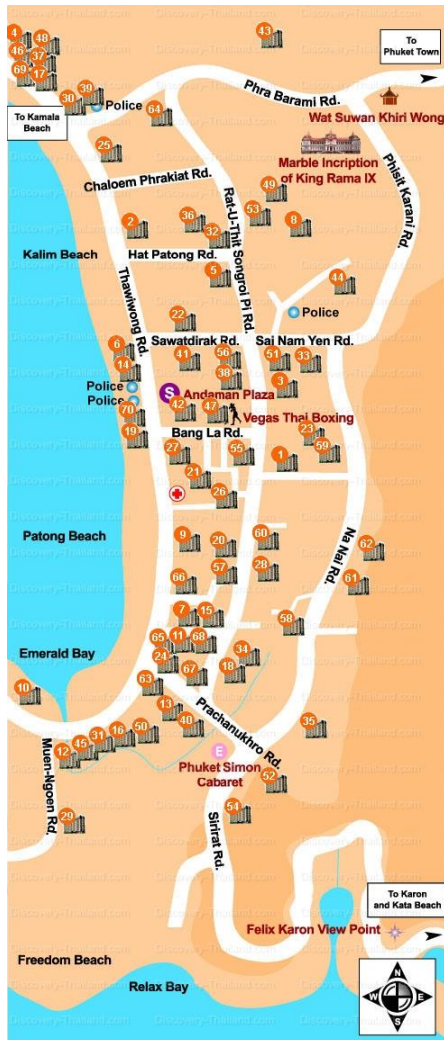
No.	Name	Star rating	Location	Type	Number of rooms
170	S.D. AVENUE HOTEL	3	Bangkok	hotel	315
171	ST. JAMES HOTEL	3	Bangkok	hotel	78
172	ALL SEASON SATHORN BANGKOK	3	Bangkok	hotel	78
173	BANGKOK RAMA HOTEL	3	Bangkok	hotel	158
174	ALEXANDER HOTEL BANGKOK	3	Bangkok	resort	308
175	PINNACLE LUMPINEE HOTEL&SPA BANGKOK	3	Bangkok	hotel	179
176	VIENGTAI HOTEL	3	Bangkok	hotel	215
177	ALL SEASONS GOLD ORCHID HOTEL	3	Bangkok	hotel	154
178	ANGKHANG NATURE RESORT	3	Chiangmai	resort	75
179	EURASIA CHIANG MAI HOTEL	3	Chiangmai	hotel	34
180	HOLIDAY GARDEN HOTEL & RESORT	3	Chiangmai	resort	164
181	CHIANGMAI RATTANAKOSIN HOTEL	3	Chiangmai	hotel	88
182	THE IMPERIAL GOLDEN TRIANGLE RESORT	3	Chiangrai	resort	73
183	BEST WESTERN PATTAYA	3	Chonburi	resort	79
184	ISLAND VIEW HOTEL	3	Chonburi	resort	147
185	JP VILLA HOTEL	3	Chonburi	hotel	68
186	MERCURE HOTEL PATTAYA	3	Chonburi	resort	247
187	CHON INTER HOTEL	3	Chonburi	hotel	148
188	PUNG-WAAN RESORT	3	Kanchanaburi	resort	71
189	RIVER KWAI VILLAGE HOTEL	3	Kanchanaburi	resort	114
190	THE LEGACY RIVER KWAI RESORT	3	Kanchanaburi	resort	70
191	RIVER KWAI HOTEL	3	Kanchanaburi	hotel	157
192	BUSSARAKAM HOTEL	3	Khonkaen	hotel	157
193	BEST WESTERN AO NANG BAY RESORT & SPA	3	Krabi	resort	67
194	BEST WESTERN BAN AO NANG RESORT	3	Krabi	resort	108
195	PHI PHI NATURAL RESORT	3	Krabi	resort	70
196	PHRANANG INN	3	Krabi	resort	69
197	KRABI CHA-DA RESORT	3	Krabi	resort	79
198	DUANGJAI RESORT	3	Krabi	resort	20
199	PASAK HILLSIDE RESORT	3	Lop Buri	resort	36
200	THE IMPERIAL TARA MAE HONG SON HOTEL	3	Mae Hong Son	resort	104
201	NEWPATTANA HOTEL	3	Maharakham	hotel	94
202	THE BONANZA KHAO YAI HOTEL	3	NAKORN RATCHASIMA	hotel	78
203	AYARA VILLAS	3	Phang Nga	resort	80
204	BAAN KHAOLAK RESORT	3	Phang-Nga	resort	68

No.	Name	Star rating	Location	Type	Number of rooms
205	LONG BEACH CHA-AM HOTEL	3	Phetburi	hotel	193
206	ALL SEASONS NAIHARN PHUKET	3	Phuket	resort	104
207	BEST WESTERN PRUKET OCEAN RESORT	3	Phuket	resort	180
208	ROYAL CROWN HOTEL & PALM SPA RESORT	3	Phuket	resort	64
209	BY THE SEA	3	Phuket	resort	36
210	KUIBURI HOTEL & RESORT	3	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	75
211	NAPALAI RESORT & SPA	3	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	55
212	BAAN TALAY DAO	3	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	32
213	HUA-HIN GRAND HOTEL AND PLAZA	3	Prachuabkhirikhan	hotel	160
214	HADYAI GOLDEN CROWN HOTEL	3	Songkhla	hotel	102
215	GOLDEN CROWN PLAZA HOTEL	3	Songkhla	hotel	210
216	BEST WESTERN SAMUI BAYVIEW RESORT & SPA	3	Suratthani	resort	54
217	PHANGANBURI RESORT & SPA	3	Suratthani	resort	106
218	CHABA SAMUI RESORT	3	Suratthani	resort	93
219	SAMUI NATIEN RESORT	3	Suratthani	resort	51
220	PINNACLE RESORT SAMUI	3	Suratthani	resort	59
221	CHAWANG COVE RESOTEL KOH SAMUI	3	Suratthani	resort	73
222	BANANA FAN SEA RESORT HOTEL	3	Suratthani	resort	73
223	MALAYSIA HOTEL	2	Bangkok	hotel	120
224	CITY LODGE SOI 19	2	Bangkok	hotel	34
225	CITY LODGE SOI 9	2	Bangkok	hotel	28
226	PATTANA HOTEL	2	Mahasarakam	hotel	70
227	SUN HOTEL	2	Phetburi	hotel	52
228	BAAN DUANG KAEW RESORT HUA HIN	2	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	19
229	HADTHONG HOTEL	2	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	142
230	MALAI ASIA RESORT	2	Prachuabkhirikhan	resort	20
231	KING'S HOTEL	2	Songkhla	hotel	79

Table: List of the Hotels with Membership Under the Thai Hotel Association

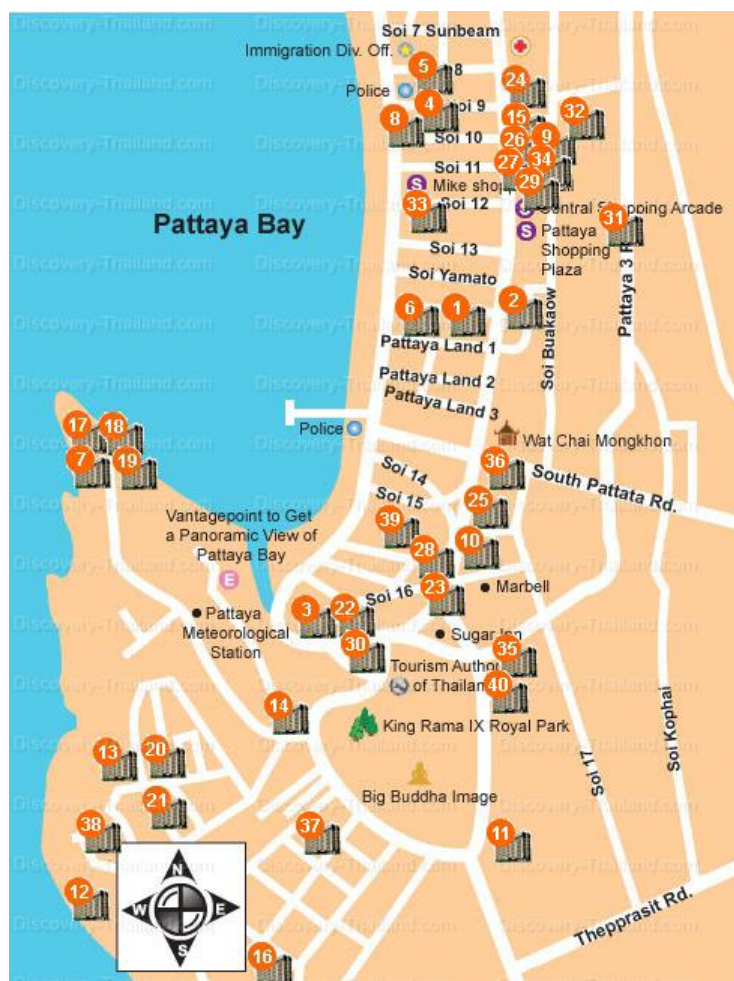
(Data Source: THA (2012) <http://thaihotels.org/name-list-for-hotel-resort-2012/>)

Appendix 9: Sample of Thailand Hotel Guide Map



Phuket : Southern Region

<http://www.discovery-thailand.com/Hotels%20Map%20Pages/Phuket%20Map/Patong%20Hotel%20Location%20Map.html>



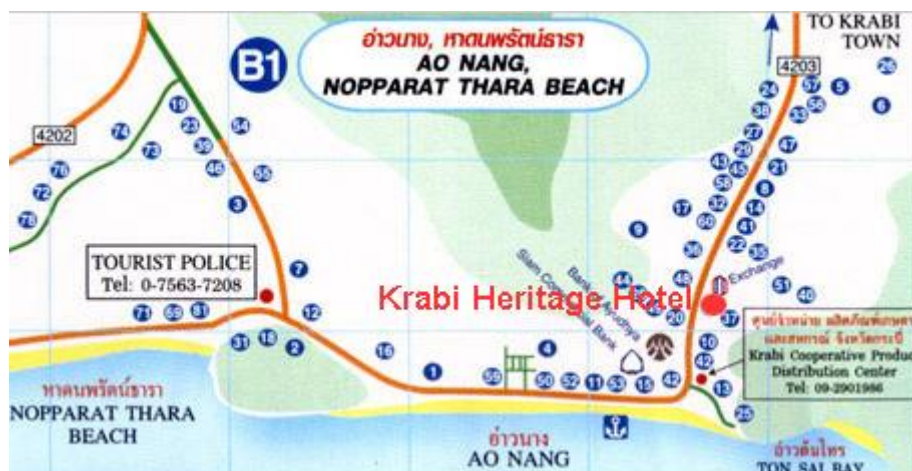
Pattaya: Eastern Region

<http://www.discovery-thailand.com/Hotels%20Map%20Pages/Pattaya%20Map/South%20Pattaya%20Hotel%20Location%20Map.html>



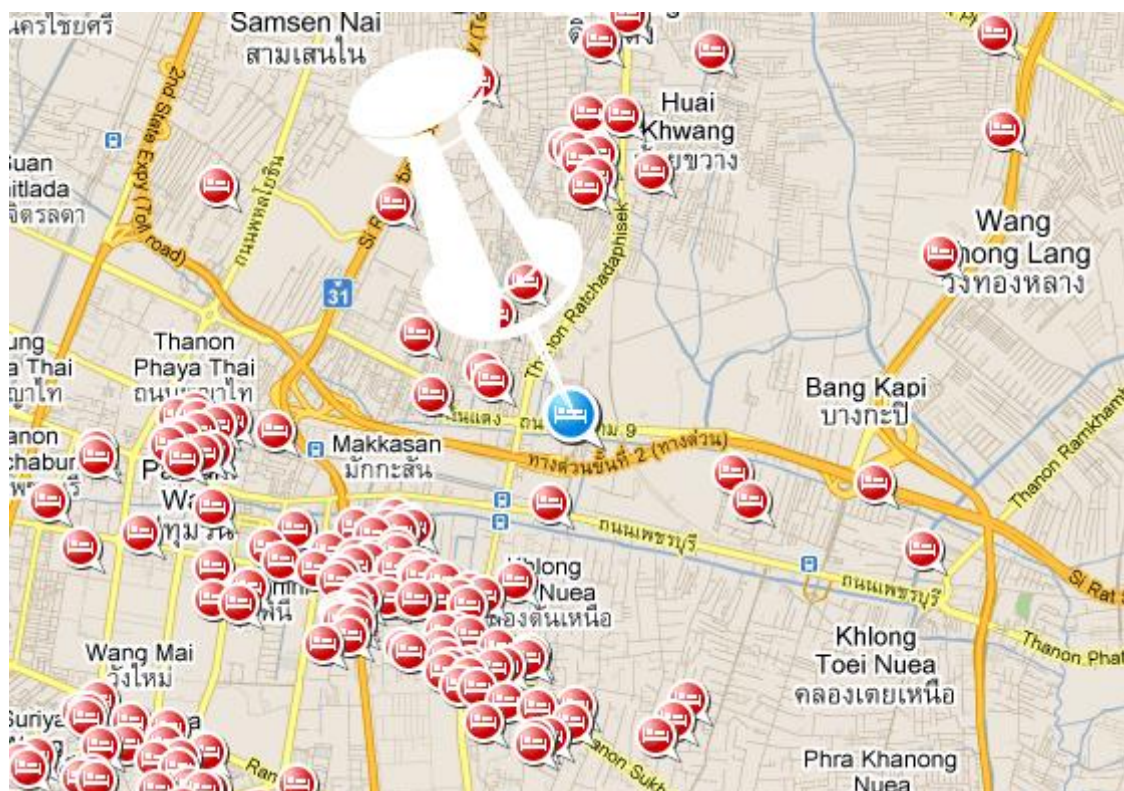
Chiangmai: Northern Region

<http://www.mappery.com/map-of/Chiang-Mai-Hotel-Map>



Krabi: Southern Region

<http://www.krabieasy.com/thai/krabiheritage/>



Bangkok: Capital

<http://www.southtravels.com/asia/thailand/goldentulipsovereign/index.html>

