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Title: **Talent Drain in the Hospitality Industry: An Investigation of Employee Migration from Luxury Hotels**

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Talent Drain in the Hospitality Industry: An Investigation of Employee Migration from Luxury Hotels

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Abstract

In the hospitality sector, the availability of skilled human resources is crucial for providing high-end experiences to guests and ensuring a high quality of service. As employee flow has been on the rise from luxury hotels to allied industries, however, it has become a problem. The significant talent drain and instability in the workforce are significant challenges. This research aims to explore the barriers and enablers that affect employees from luxury hotel moving to other allied industries and the effect of employee attrition within organizations and talent retention. Secondary data were used in the study, which was extracted from scholarly articles, industry reports, and existing literature pertaining to employee turnover, workforce mobility, and talent management in the hospitality industry. The results show that the major factors for employee migration are long and irregular working hours, work related stress, emotional labor, lack of opportunities to advance in their careers, lack of rewards, and lack of creativity in work life balance. Other fields like banking, aviation, healthcare, retail, and information technology, on the other hand, recruit hospitality workers for higher pay, a strong career path, stability and better working conditions. The study also reveals that Talent Drain has a negative impact on luxury hotels as it leads to high recruitment and training expenses, service quality, morale of employees and operational challenges. Lack of skilled workers also affects customer satisfaction and the competitiveness of the company.

The analysis shows that strategic HRM practices are important to solve the problem of employee migration. Compensation, career development, employee recognition, supportive leadership, work-life balance policies, and employee engagement policies are effective retention tools and approaches. The study argues that a multifaceted and employee-centred strategy is needed to address talent attrition, and that job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and career development potential are three areas in which to take action. The results offer important implications for hotel managers, HR professionals, and policy makers interested in enhancing the sustainability of the tourism workforce and retaining their employees in the high-end tourism industry.

Keywords: Talent Drain, Employee Migration, Luxury Hotels, Hospitality Industry, Employee retention, Workforce Mobility, Human Resource Management, Allied Sectors.

Introduction

The tourism sector is one of the largest service sectors in the world and it is and will continue to be an important contributor to economic development, employment and tourism growth. Human resources are also a significant factor in the industry, as they play a crucial role in ensuring the quality of the services provided and in achieving customer satisfaction (Ghani et al., 2022). Hospitality organizations rely heavily on their frontline workers to make a guests' experience memorable and to improve their competitiveness within the business. As a result, attracting, developing and retaining talented resources has become a priority for hotel organizations.

But in recent years, the hotel sector has faced serious issues in regard to talent loss. Talent drain is the phenomenon of transfer of highly qualified and experienced workers from one sector to another and thereby loss of skilled and experienced human resources (Bokde et al., 2025). In the hospitality industry, this is especially pronounced in luxury hotels, where highly skilled workers are now increasingly moving to other industries like aviation, retail, banking, healthcare, and information technology and business process outsourcing (BPO) (Kim et al., 2019). The migration has raised significant issues about the sustainability of the workforce and the quality of services in the tourism sector.

There are a number of organizational and personal issues which affect employee turnover at luxury establishments. Hospitality workers frequently have irregular and long hours of work, such as working during weekends, holidays, and at night. These rigorous demands often result in work-life imbalance, job stress, and job burnout, negatively impacting job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Kim et al., 2019). Moreover, luxury hotels require their employees to consistently provide high-quality service, deal with customer expectations and address service failures, which raises emotional labor and service stress in the workplace (Manolopoulos et al., 2022).

Pay and promotion prospects can also be important reasons for staying in a job. While luxury hotels offer structured training and development programs, employees might believe that they can earn higher wages and get promoted quicker in other related industries (Nair & Khilnani, 2022). Youth workers, especially the millennial and Generation Z, have greater expectations for flexibility, learning and work-life balance in their job selection process. As a result, numerous hospitality workers look for employment possibilities outside their field to help them realize their personal and professional goals (Bokde et al., 2025).

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated trends in employee migration in the hospitality sector. Many hotels, during the pandemic, cut down their activities or fired the employees or offered salary cuts, making it easier for employees to look for other stable industries and jobs (Ghani et al., 2022). With the revival of the hospitality sector, companies faced serious labour issues as many of their previous staff had already carved out careers elsewhere. This change in the workforce made the hospitality industry very susceptible and put the emphasis on developing effective retention strategies.

The Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) framework is helpful to analyze employee migration behavior. This approach suggests that push, pull and mooring forces play a role in determining migration decisions, with push factors driving employees to move to other jobs, pull factors prompting them to seek out other job opportunities, and mooring factors either encouraging or discouraging movement (Kim et al., 2019). In the hospitality industry, push factors can range from work stress, low wages, restricted promotional opportunities to poor work-life balance. Pull factors could include job security and better opportunities in related industries, as well as improved working conditions and higher wages. It is important to recognize these factors in order to create strategies that help employees to stay. It is critical to recognize these factors to create strategies that help employees to stay.

Other factors that can impact employee migration, such as organizational culture and leadership practice, can also have a significant effect. Companies with supportive leadership, clear communication, recognition, and opportunities for growth have a higher retention rate (Bokde et al., 2025). On the other hand, low management practices, low levels of employee engagement and empowerment, lead to increased employee turnaround intention. Studies have shown that employee engagement and organizational commitment also have a significant effect on decreasing turnover intentions and improving turnover outcomes (Manolopoulos et al, 2022).

The evolving nature of work has also shifted the expectations of employees due to technological developments and digitalisation. The hybrid working model, digital working environment, and flexible job opportunities are becoming common in many allied sectors. Hospitality occupations, in contrast, demand a certain amount of physical contact and face-to-face interactions with customers, and are less appealing to employees that prefer flexibility (Kansakar et al., 2017). This has made it difficult for luxury hotels to be the first choice for good staff, which in turn has led to other sectors competing with the luxury hotel industry in their ability to secure top talent.

The importance of the problem of the talent drain has now become a serious concern in India with the growth of the hospitality industry and allied service sectors. There has been huge development of luxury hotels and banking, retail, healthcare, aviation, and information technology jobs in metropolitan cities like Kolkata. Thus, there are growing difficulties for the hospitality sector in attracting and retaining qualified staff who are impressed by the opportunities and standard of living in other industries (Nair & Khilnani, 2022).

Kolkata's booming hospitality sector and its varied service economy make it an ideal place to study employee migration from luxury hotels. Some of the reason why employees are leaving luxury hotels for allied businesses might give some insights to managers, hotel policy makers and HR people. This knowledge can help shape strategies for talent management that will improve employee retention, increase job satisfaction, and promote sustainability of the workforce.

Accordingly, the present study aims to explore the phenomenon of talent drain in the hospitality industry with an investigation of the causes, trends and consequences of staff migration from luxury hotels. This study's findings are anticipated to be used to add to the body of knowledge related to hospitality workforce management and to offer actionable insights on how to limit employee turnover and enhance talent retention efforts for the luxury hotel industry.

Literature Review

Concept of Talent Drain in the Hospitality Industry

Talent drain is the departure of skilled, experienced and high performing employees from one organisation or industry to another industry or organisation where they are able to find better careers. The hospitality sector has faced the phenomenon of talent drain because of the high employee turnover, labor-intensive operations, and growing competition from allied sectors. The service industry is a particularly vulnerable sector since service quality is directly tied to the competence, commitment and interaction with the customer of the employee. Han (2022) stated that employee turnover in the hospitality sector is between 60% and 120% per year, which makes it one of the highest in service industries. Staff turnover leads to higher recruitment expenses, loss of company know-how and disruption of service quality.

Luxury hotels make a big investment in employee training and development, to ensure that guests have superb experiences. Yet, many trained employees choose to move to other industries like aviation, retail, banking, healthcare and information technology, leading to a significant attrition of human capital. This migration has created even more anxiety about the sustainability of the workforce and competitiveness of these organizations in the hospitality sector.

Employee Turnover and Migration in Hospitality

One of the most extensively studied areas in the hospitality industry is employee turnover. Turnover intention is a conscious decision to leave an organization and is believed to be the most powerful determinant of actual turnover. Park and Min (2020) performed a meta-analysis on 144 independent studies to discover a number of antecedents of turnover intention in hospitality organizations. The study revealed that organizational commitment, job satisfaction, work engagement, and job embeddedness are significant factors in decreasing the intention to quit, while emotional exhaustion, job stress and role conflict are significant factors in increasing the intention to quit.

Nguyen et al. (2023) have compiled and reviewed 72 empirical studies on the perspectives of frontline employees in the tourism and hospitality industry and found that turnover intention is still a significant problem that frontline staff face in the tourism industry, which is associated with stressors at the job, emotional labor, and lack of career promotion opportunities. The authors pointed out that frontline employees are more likely to turn over, as they are often dealing with difficult customers, irregular work hours and high expectations.

Studies show that movement of staff from hospitality to allied industries is not just a job change, but a job transition trend. The alternative sectors are becoming more attractive to employees as a result of higher pay, more predictable hours, more job security and more career advancement opportunities. They foster a sense of the industry that is not within their reach to work in, which leads to long-term talent shortages.

Theory of Push-Pull-Mooring and Employee Migration

The Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) framework has become widely-used to understand the reasons behind the migration of employees in the hospitality sector. The theory was first applied to migration studies, where it implies that people decide to quit their job based on push factors, and either are drawn to other options via pull factors or experience mooring factors that will either encourage or impede migration.

Kim et al. (2019) used the PPM framework in the context of turnover among those working in hotels, and found that workload, emotional labour, interpersonal conflict, work-life imbalance, and limited career progression were significant push factors. Certain sectors offered better salaries, professional development, working environments and social status, which were deemed to be pull factors. The study also established that there is a link between community fit, travel opportunities, and turnover intention, as these factors contribute to employees' attachment to the hospitality industry.

The importance of the PPM framework is that it can help to understand why hospitality members leave their organisations as well as relocate completely to another sector. This theoretical approach offers a general view of the concept of workforce mobility and is a helpful tool for exploring the phenomenon of talent drain in luxury hotels.

Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

Employee satisfaction with their job has always proved to be one of the most significant factors in turnover across hospitality businesses. Happy staff are less likely to quit an organization due to poor workplace, salary, recognition, or career development. Han (2022) found that two individual-level factors, namely job satisfaction and organizational commitment, are the most important ones for employee retention in a hospitality organisation.

Likewise, Park and Min (2020) found that organizational commitment was one of the highest negative correlations with the intention to quit. When employees feel emotionally connected to their organizations and share its values, they are more likely to be loyal and want to stay with the organization.

Research also suggests that supportive leadership, fair performance appraisal systems, employee recognition initiatives and professional development opportunities play a large role in improving job satisfaction and organizational commitment. As a result, companies that prioritize employee satisfaction and engagement are more likely to keep their employees.

The primary goal of this unit is to help students understand the impact of work stress, emotional labour and work-life balance on an employee.

Hospitality workers frequently find themselves in challenging work situations, with expectations from customers, emotional demands and working long hours, as well as shift work. All these can have a huge impact on employee stress and burnout.

Kim et al. (2019) discovered that emotional work, workload, interpersonal tension, and work-interference with personal life are significant factors to increase the intentions to quit among the employees in the hotel industry. Staff who have to repress their emotions to provide the standards of service become emotionally exhausted, and therefore are unhappy and are lost.

Moreover, Park and Min (2020) noted that emotional exhaustion, role conflict and work-family conflict were the most important precursors of turnover intention in hospitality settings. The need for staff to work on weekends, public holidays and irregular hours in the hospitality industry can lead to work-life imbalance, which can encourage employees to look for employment in other industries that provide more consistent hours and flexible working.

Organizational and Team-Level Factors

Teams and organizations have variables that also affect employee turnover, in addition to individual variables. Han (2022) classified the turnover antecedents into individual, team and organizational level and found that the most influential factors were organizational level factors. These include aspects of organization culture, leadership, communication, rewards and career development.

Supervisors who are supportive, communicate well, work cooperatively, and provide employees with opportunities for growth play a positive role in retention. On the other hand, low levels of organizational support, conflict, authoritarianism, and a lack of organizational justice lead to higher turnover intentions. Those who feel that the organization is not supporting them want to look for other employment options where professional respect and development are higher.

The effects of talent drain in luxury hotels

The concept of talent drain is quite significant to luxury hotel operations. The direct costs of employee/volunteer turnover include recruitment, selection, training and onboarding. Indirect costs encompass a decline in service quality, customer satisfaction, employee morale, and a breakdown in the organization's culture.

Analyzing all hotel turnover studies showed that high employee turnover has a negative impact on customer satisfaction, service quality and financial results. The absence of skilled staff at luxury hotels can have a significant effect on customer satisfaction and brand image, as they are essential for delivering personalized services.

Also, the constant rate of turnover leads to a decrease in employees and an increase in their workload, which can cause more staff members to become dissatisfied and leave as well. This phenomenon highlights the need for organisations to focus on talent retention as a key strategy to ensure service excellence and long-term business success.

Research Gap

While much research has been conducted in the field of employee turnover and retention in the hospitality sector, there are a few gaps. The first one is that most studies are concerned more with intention to turn over in the hospitality organisation than with migration to allied sectors. Second, there is little empirical research specifically focusing on the phenomenon of employee turnover from luxury hotels to other sectors, such as banking, aviation, health, retail, and information technology.

Thirdly, there is limited research on the Indian context, especially in the metropolitan cities like Kolkata.

In addition, the existing research is mostly concerned with organizational level of turnover whereas the phenomenon of talent drain calls for knowledge about employees' career goals and sectoral preferences, as well as their motivations of migration. So, empirical studies are needed to explore the push and pull factors leading employees to move from luxury accommodation to allied industries and how to improve their willingness to stay in the hospitality sector.

Considering these gaps, the present study tries to fill them by analyzing the causes, pattern and impact of employee migration from luxury hotels in Kolkata to allied sectors which comes under the scope of hospitality industry research and human resource management in hotels.

Objectives

1. To find out the factors affecting the migration of employees from luxury hotels to allied industries.
2. To investigate how the movement of employees within luxury hotels affects the functioning of the business and retention of employees.
3. To propose effective human resource and retention measures that can help to minimise the loss of talent in the hospitality sector.

Results and Analysis

Objective 1: To Identify the Factors Influencing Employee Migration from Luxury Hotels to Allied Sectors

The findings from the secondary literature review revealed that the factors affecting employee migration from luxury hotels to allied sectors are organization, economic and personal factors. Work-life imbalance, job stress, lack of career development opportunities, job compensation dissatisfaction, and job insecurity are the most consistent factors that have been found to drive migration, according to studies.

Kim et al. (2019) used Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) framework and discovered that too much workload, emotional labor, irregular working hours, and working stress are identified as the major push factors that might lead employees to quit the hospitality industry. Luxury hotels fill up on the weekends, public holidays, and at night, which makes it hard for the employees to have a healthy work-life balance. Thus, a large number of workers have gone into the industry where they can count on more regular and predictable working hours, like banking, retail, healthcare, aviation, and information technology (Kim et al., 2019).

Likewise, Park and Min (2020) found that emotional exhaustion, role conflict, and work-family conflict are significant factors that affect workplace turnover intentions in hospitality organizations. They conducted a meta-analysis and found that workers with high stress are more likely to consider other career opportunities off the hospitality sector. The study also found that job satisfaction is negatively associated with turnover intentions, and organizational commitment is negatively associated with turnover intentions, suggesting that negative job satisfaction and negative organizational commitment are associated with an increased likelihood of employees seeking to transition to other industries that are related to the organization.

Other key factors that arose were compensation and career development opportunities. Nair and Khilnani (2022) noted that the other service workers are perceived as providing better pay, incentives, and opportunities for promotion for hospitality workers. The expansion of emerging industries like information technology, banking sector, and e-commerce has made it more competitive for acquiring skilled human resources. Staff are making career choices more on the basis of long-term financial stability and career growth instead of employer loyalty.There is a greater emphasis than ever before on long-term career decisions based on financial security and career growth instead of employer loyalty.

The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the further strengthening of migration trends. The pandemic created a job market landscape in which job instabilities, pay cuts, and closures of businesses in the hospitality sector pushed a lot of hospitality workers into another sector of greater stability (Ghani et al., 2022). Consequently, the hospitality industry has faced a major challenge in addressing the labor shortage in the recovery from the pandemic.

Analysis

Based on the secondary data analysis, it is found that there are push and pull factors that are the main triggers behind the migration of employees. Push factors are associated with stress at work, irregular working hours, emotional stress and lack of career development, and pull factors are increased pay, better work-life balance, and better job security in related industries. Results suggest that, besides economic factors, workers' need for career stability, professional advancement and personal health drives their migration decisions. So, it's not just about employees changing jobs from luxury hotels; it's also about a strategic career change.

Objective 2: To analyze how staff turnover affects the functioning of luxury hotels and employee retention.

Secondary literature shows that the employee migration has significant implications for luxury hotel's operational efficiency and sustainability. When skilled workers leave, they take with them the knowledge of the organization, the experience of the services and the knowledge of the clients, which are essential to providing excellent guest experience.

Han (2022) states that high employee turnover can lead to higher recruitment and selection expenses, training and onboarding expenses and other costs. Employee development is an important commitment of luxury hotels that help maintain their high level of service. When staff members depart the profession, companies have to spend extra to hire and train the new individuals, which increases operational costs.

Giousmpasoglou et al. (2023) claimed that employee turnover has a negative impact on service quality and customer satisfaction. Luxury hospitality is dependent on personalized service and the absence of experienced employees adversely affects service consistency and guest relationships. High levels of turnover can lead to inefficiencies and communication breakdowns, as well as lower productivity.

Park and Min (2020) have also found that high staff turnover rates negatively affect employee morale of the remaining employees. The shortage of staff can cause staff members to become overworked, potentially causing burnout and driving additional turnover. This can lead to a vicious circle of attrition that can negatively affect the stability of an organization.

In addition, when demand is high the hotel is unable to maintain its standards of service due to a lack of staff. According to Ghani et al. (2022), the surge in labor shortages following the pandemic has led to a decrease in the number of employees working in many hotels, which has impacted their service delivery and performance. Luxury hotels are facing a significant problem with attracting experienced professionals, as it is difficult for them to stay competitive.

Analysis

The results reveal the direct and indirect impact of employee migration on luxury hotels. Direct effects involve higher recruitment, training expenses; indirect effects involve lower quality of service, lower satisfaction with service, lower employee morale, and lower organizational productivity. The findings indicate that talent drain is a strategic HR issue that has the potential to negatively impact organization performance and competitiveness in the long run. Therefore, retaining talent is a major challenge in the luxury hotel sector.

Objective 3: To Suggest Effective Human Resource and Retention Strategies for Reducing Talent Drain in the Hospitality Industry

Numerous HR practices are identified in the literature that can help to decrease employee turnover and improve employee retention in luxury hotels. The retention strategies for employees need to consider factors that both encourage and deter employee migration.

Ghani et al. (2022) highlighted the need to build positive work cultures with a focus on employee wellness, recognition and career advancement. Employers that offer professional development, mentoring, and ongoing training tend to have more talented employees. Enhanced career development opportunities improve employees' perceptions of their likelihood of staying with the organization and their intent to leave the organization.

Han (2022) revealed that leadership quality is a significant factor contributing to employee retention. Favorable working relationships with supervisors, effective communication, and employee empowerment are all significant factors in organizational commitment and satisfaction. Those who believe that their companies are well supported are less inclined to move to other industries.

Other benefits that have come to the forefront include flexible working and work-life balance measures as retention tools. While a workforce that can't be in the room can be there, there are ways for organizations to create flexibility with their schedules, offer wellness initiatives and have a plan for employee assistance to help diminish workplace stress. This can help to create a more positive work environment and increase employee satisfaction.

Pay and reward are still significant retention methods. In their study, Nair and Khilnani (2022) discovered that compensation is a significant factor in employee retention, with competitive salaries and incentives proving effective in retaining workers, while recognition programs also showed positive results.

Analysis

The analysis indicates that to reduce the human resource talent drain, a holistic and employee-focused approach to human resource management (HRM) is needed. Retention strategies should address things such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, career development and work-life balance. Compensation alone is not enough to keep an employee, a positive leadership, professional development, and culture are all necessary. Hence, luxury hotels need to implement a talent management plan which will meet the changing expectations of today's labor force.

Conclusion

One of the most crucial requirements in the hospitality sector is to have highly skilled and experienced staff members to provide quality services and ensure customer satisfaction. But the flight of workers from the top-end hotels to allied industries has become a major problem causing huge attrition in the hospitality sector. Secondary data analysis results show that there are certain push and pull factors affecting employee migrations. Long and irregular working hours, work-related stress, emotional labor, lack of promotion prospects, lack of work-life balance, and job insecurity are key push factors. Hospitality workers, on the other hand, are drawn to other sectors by the "pull" factors of higher wages, better work conditions, and improved career opportunities and work stability, as well as better work-life balance.

The research also shows that the loss of talent can have substantial impacts on the luxury hotel business. When qualified and experienced workers leave, the organizations incur additional hiring and training expenses, lose their knowledge, diminish the service quality, customer satisfaction, and inefficiencies. High staff turnover also has a negative impact on staff morale, organization stability and poses further challenges to hotel management. The ability to deliver personalized service and customer interaction is a key strength of luxury hotels, and the loss of skilled staff can have a significant effect on their competitive advantage and sustainability.

The findings indicate that strategic HRM practices are crucial in order to deal with employee migration and enhance employee retention. Competitive pay and benefits, clear career paths, engaging work, work-life balance, recognition programs and supportive leadership and culture are effective retention strategies. Moreover, technology-based HRM and HR analytics can help companies pinpoint the risk of employee attrition and plan preventive retention strategies.

Overall, the loss of talent in the hospitality sector is not just a problem of organizations, but a problem of the workforce at large, impacting the quality of service, productivity, and the growth of the industry. To attract, develop and retain talented professionals, luxury hotels need to implement more overall and employee-focused retention programs. Hospitality companies can enhance the sustainability of their workforce, optimize the operation and remain competitive in a rapidly changing labor market by taking action to address the conditions that drive employee attrition and build a positive work environment.

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