



Strategy, training and performance fit



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ABSTRACT

The importance of human resource qualification for the tourism industry in general and for hotel firms in particular has been a recurrent theme for several years now. The present paper deals with training policy in hotels and has as its aim to know the extent to which their strategic orientation influences: (1) the investment that firms make in training; (2) the preparation of formal plans; and (3) the type of training developed. It is also our intention to check whether this strategy-training link has an impact on hotel performance. With that aim in mind, an attempt will be made to see whether the effect of training on business results is direct or materializes through a number of intermediate variables such as client satisfaction or changes in the behavior of employees (indirect effect). A comprehensive analysis of the literature was conducted to identify the main research and establishing the hypotheses to be tested. Our paper used a sample of Spanish companies with the partial least squares (PLS) method being applied for the analysis. The results show that the development of a training policy oriented to human capital development in the case of hotels following a differentiation strategy leads to improved business results both directly and indirectly, while simultaneously influencing investment as well as formality in training activities.

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1. Introduction

Human capital qualification in tourism firms appears as a key factor in customer satisfaction, service quality, competitiveness and organizational performance. This idea is supported by a wide range of theories and empirical studies in tourism management, strategy, and service literature, all of which stress the critical role that human resources play within organizations. On the theoretical side, the resource-based theory (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984) and its variants – the dynamic capability theory (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007; Helfat and Peteraf, 2009); the competency-based theory (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Acedo et al., 2006); the knowledge-based theory (Grant, 1996; Felin and Hesterly, 2007; Nonaka et al., 2008); the organizational social capital theory (Leana and Van Buren, 1999; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Arregle et al., 2007); and the intellectual capital theory (Stewart, 1997; Subramaniam and Youndt, 2005; Reed et al., 2006) – posit that valuable, rare, non-substitutable, or

imperfectly imitable firm-specific resources, assets, and capabilities can become an important source of sustainable competitive advantage and differential performance between companies. In this context, it is argued that human capital (employee knowledge, experience, ability, personality, skills, internal and external relationships, attitudes and behaviors) turns out to be essential in the creation of specific advantages for companies. Employee attributes are directly influenced by human resource management (HRM) policies and practices (Kusluvan et al., 2010). In the same way, the models developed in the literature dedicated to management services, such as the service profit chain model (Heskett et al., 1994; Anderson and Mittal, 2000; Helgesen, 2006; Williams and Naumann, 2011), the service quality gap model (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Seth et al., 2005), and others (see Ghobadian et al., 1994; Chen and Mo, 2012), emphasize the role that employees can play in customer satisfaction, service quality, and organizational performance.

It is well known that services have an intangible nature and customers form part of the service through customer-provider interaction. In this way, services are made tangible in attitudes, personality and provider behavior. Employees become a part of the product, symbolize the organization and help to create a company image (Bitner et al., 1990; Hartline and Jones, 1996). Therefore, employees and the way in which they are managed appear as

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determinant factors for customer satisfaction, loyalty, service quality and performance (Bitner et al., 1990; Nickson et al., 2002; Schneider et al., 2003; Rogg et al., 2001; Saravanan and Rao, 2007).

Training policy has always deserved special attention within the studies devoted to human resource management in the hotel industry (Buick and Muthu, 1997; Conrade et al., 1994; Roehl and Swerdlow, 1999; Tracey and Nathan, 2002; Washington et al., 2003). The importance of training hospitality employees is broadly recognized, as can be seen in the literature review carried out by Singh et al. (2007). It is desirable that the investment made by companies to train their employees will result in improved organizational performance, since numerous empirical studies have proved the existence of a negative relationship between training policy and performance outcomes (Aragón-Sánchez et al., 2003; Birley and Westhead, 1990; Ghebreorgis and Karsten, 2007; Ngo et al., 1998; Shaw et al., 1998; Wiley, 1991; Wright et al., 1999); hence the need to analyze whether the investment in training has an impact on organizational effectiveness. That is actually the reason which led us to carry out this research which has as its aim to provide empirical evidence about the relationship between strategy, training, and organizational performance.

The present research seeks two essential goals: (1) making a contribution to the already existing literature on the contingent approach to human resource management and its influence on hotel firms' performance; and (2) using the results obtained to help managers identify the aspects within training policy which become essential to achieve the appropriate returns for the investment made in their hotels' human capital.

2. Literature review: training, business strategy, and organizational performance

2.1. Perspectives about training

The hard version of human resource management which prevailed until the 1980s in firms gave way to the so-called strategic human resource management approach (SHRM), which could be characterized by four elements: the use of planning; a coherent approach to the design and management of personnel systems underpinned by the organizational philosophy; matching HRM activities and policies to business strategy; and seeing the individuals within the organization as strategic resources in the achievement of a competitive strategy.

The literature on strategic human resource management provides a variety of approaches that link human resource practices and performance, namely: the universalist approach, the contingent approach and the configurational one, developed, amongst others, by authors such as Delery and Doty (1996) and McMahan et al. (1999). Each of these approaches additionally portrays a different relationship between training and results.

The universalist approach proposes the existence of human resource management practices which are better than others (the so-called 'best practices'). For example, Russel et al. (1985), along with Terpstra and Rozell (1993) identify connections between recruitment, training and productivity; Bartel (1994), along with Knoke and Kalleberg (1994), conclude that the organizations which implement formal training schemes do so to improve their productivity; and finally, Delaney and Huselid (1996) found that the HR practices which affect employee skills, motivation and work structure are positively related to organizational results. Following this universalist approach, those organizations which provide more training will become more effective (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Bae and Lawler, 2000; Batt, 2002; Gelade and Ivery, 2003; De Saá Pérez and Falcón, 2004; Wright et al., 2003).

On the other hand, supporters of the contingent perspective argue that training policy depends on the strategic approach taken by each firm (Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Miles and Snow, 1984; Hussey, 1985; Huselid, 1995; Delery and Doty, 1996; Bae and Lawler, 2000; Khatri, 2000; Guthrie et al., 2002; Bae et al., 2003; Chan et al., 2004; or Peña and Villalero, 2010). The contingency approach suggests that extensive formal training will turn out to be more effective when used in combination with certain strategies adopted by the organization.

Finally, the configurational approach stresses the importance of complementarity between the different human resource management practices (Ostroff and Bowen, 2000). In other words, human resource practices should be complementary and interdependent within the framework of high-performance systems that work together to develop the value and unique human capacities which can improve an organization's efficiency (Arthur, 1992, 1994; Mcduffie and Kochan, 1995; Youndt et al., 1996; Delery and Doty, 1996; Hoque, 1999; Alleyne et al., 2006; Vlachos, 2008). The configurational perspective suggests that training will improve organizational effectiveness to a greater extent when used in conjunction with other complementary human resource practices. Therefore, training must be consistent with other practices such as: careful selection of applicants for potential and trainability, practices aimed at reducing staff turnover, use of internal promotion and internal labor markets; adoption of contingent performance incentive systems, broadly defined jobs, and providing opportunities for employee participation (Baron and Kreps, 1999; Lepak and Snell, 1999).

It could have been thought that the 'universalist versus contingent' debate had been settled long ago in favor of the contingency theory. It has a strong logic, particularly as far as the strategic fit with the external environment is concerned. However, the empirical evidence appears to favor a universalist model (Combs et al., 2006; Guest, 2011). Hence our decision to place training policy within the contingent approach in this study for the purpose of verifying not only whether training management in the Spanish hotel industry is in keeping with the business strategy but also to know the extent to which this has a bearing on performance.

2.2. Training and strategy: contingent approach

According to the contingency theory (Miles and Snow, 1984; Porter, 1985; Schuler and Jackson, 1987), HRM practices must be combined with specific business strategies if they are to enhance organizational performance. Firms that use a *cost-reduction* strategy must rigorously control and minimize expenses, striving for greater economies of scale as well. Efficiency is important for firms to succeed. Behavior control increases predictability by routinizing the transformation process; this includes the following orientations for training policy: emphasis on the short term; poor integration of training into business strategic aims; non-existence of formal training plans; formulation of goals focused on productivity increases; and evaluation centered on the immediate application of what has been learnt. By attempting to regulate action, this approach to HRM focuses on issues such as reliability and efficiency. Training efforts would only need to concentrate on general information such as company policies and procedures, or be used as a remedial activity aimed at correcting skill deficiencies; expressed differently, this is a reactive approach to training (Chen-Huan et al., 2009).

Firms emphasizing a *differentiation strategy* must be prepared to adapt to rapid market change and technological progress. Their employees need: to be creative; to be cooperative with one another; to be able to pursue long-term objectives; to devote proper consideration to the quality and quantity of the products and services provided; to be able to take risks; and to cope successfully with ambiguity and uncertainty (Huang, 2001). When the cause-effect

knowledge is incomplete, executives can expect actions consistent with the firm's interests without having to spell out the specific behavioral sequences required from individuals. Likewise, in the absence of crystallized performance standards, executives can utilize input control to ensure that individuals take appropriate actions – adaptively, autonomously, and in a timely fashion – without having to articulate the precise criteria by which they will be evaluated (Snell and Youndt, 1995). In this case, human resource management (Lepak et al., 2005) and training policy (Youndt et al., 1996) will have a different orientation characterized by: a detection of training needs not only oriented to the short term but also proactive (Katou and Budhwar, 2010); attention will be paid to business strategic aims so that training can add value in the long term as well; it will respond to a formal planning; the training policy goals will be designed to develop polyvalency, to prepare staff for future changes, and to increase staff involvement in the organization as well as in job motivation and satisfaction; finally, the evaluation will have a broader scope, considering variables such as the effect of training on motivation or the impact caused by the latter on long-term business performance, in addition to the short-term aspects (application to the work position, methodological design, or cost-benefit relationship).

The last case described shows a training strategy formulation essentially oriented toward the development of an organization's human capital (Wright et al., 1994); hence our decision to call it Training and Development Oriented to Human Capital (TDHC).

All the above lead us to formulate the following hypothesis:

H1. There will be a positive relationship between differentiation strategy and the use of TDHC.

2.3. Training and performance

Training policy has often been the object of criticism for being too expensive and because it does not achieve the transfer of acquired knowledge to the work position (Caudron, 2002; Kraiger et al., 2004; Salas et al., 1999; Wright and Geroy, 2001). For that reason, training is often seen as a cost center which needs to be controlled or even removed when firms are going through hard times (Kraiger, 2003). In fact, training programs are sometimes implemented for reasons other than performance improvement, for instance, legal compliance, rewarding employees, retaining good workers – or simply there are governmental subsidies to develop some training-related activities. The existence of a certain degree of skepticism about the connection between training policy and organizational performance seems logical under such circumstances. Thus, most organizations only assess training programs with criteria linked to reaction and to the perceptions of trainees about the training that they have received, and very few of them measure the impact that training causes on performance (Alliger et al., 1997; Kraiger, 2003; Kraiger et al., 2004).

Numerous empirical research studies have measured the effect that a set of human resource practices have on different measures related to organizational performance, such as productivity (Chen et al., 2003); efficiency and employee turnover (Huselid, 1995); financial performance (Huselid et al., 1997); customer satisfaction (Koys, 2003); turnover, absenteeism, productivity and quality (Richard and Johnson, 2001). The isolated effect caused by a single practice has been studied in a much smaller number of works, though (Walton, 1985; Arthur, 1992; Peck, 1994; Pfeffer, 1994; Raghuram, 1994; MacDuffie, 1995; Delery and Doty, 1996; Koch and McGrath, 1996; Huselid et al., 1997; Ichniowski et al., 1997; Bayo-Moriones and Merino-Díaz de Cerio, 2002; Ordiz Fuertes, 2002; Goval and Welch, 2004; Kruse et al., 2004).

As for the bibliography on training and performance, it is worth highlighting that some authors refer to the existence of a

positive relationship between training and performance and point out that the said relationship is sustainable over time (Kochan and Barocci, 1985; Russel et al., 1985; Walton, 1985; Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Kochan and Osterman, 1994; Peck, 1994; Raghuram, 1994; Delaney and Huselid, 1996; Bukowitz and Petrash, 1997; D'arcimocles, 1997; Black and Lynch, 2001; Ordiz Fuertes, 2002; Aragón-Sánchez et al., 2003; McGahan and Porter, 2003; Goval and Welch, 2004; Kruse et al., 2004; Úbeda, 2005; Tharenou et al., 2007; Chuang and Liao, 2010; Di Milia and Birdi, 2010; Van De Voorde et al., 2012; Park and Jacobs, 2011; Úbeda-García et al., 2013; Saks and Burke-Smalley, 2014)

The following hypothesis is posed with regard to the possible link existing between training policy and organizational performance:

H2. There will be a positive relationship between TDHC and firm performance.

Additionally, a number of studies (D'arcimocles, 1997) conclude that a positive relationship exists between training policy and business profitability, and use the firm's expenditure on training as a measurement of training. Thus, a greater expenditure on training would imply higher profitability. Our research question in this research study is whether the outlay in training activities (the higher level of expenditure on training) will depend on the type of competitive strategy adopted by the firm, as shown by Schuler and Jackson (1987) and Kydd and Oppenheim (1990), in whose opinion, firms adopting a differentiation strategy carry out a greater economic effort in the area of training than those which follow a cost leadership strategy and they will additionally train a larger proportion of the staff. This leads us to set out the next hypothesis:

H3. There will be a positive relationship between differentiation strategy and investment in training.

Furthermore, the research work developed by Klein and Weaver (2000), Alavi and Leidner (2001), and Bollinger and Smith (2001) shows that a greater effort in training generates human capital to a larger extent; and these firms own a productivity level above the average of the sector where they operate. The hotel sector – which constitutes the study object of this paper – could be characterized by a high staff turnover, low salaries and a labor market with low qualification levels, as well as by the utilization of human resource practices in their most traditional versions (hard version) (Marco-Lajara and Úbeda-García, 2013). In this context, it seems to us that those hotels which carry out a greater economic outlay in their employees' qualification do so because, on the one hand, they follow a differentiation strategy as opposed to a cost strategy, and one of the pillars for that differentiation is high qualification staff (Guthrie et al., 2002) and, on the other hand, such an investment is meant to develop the human capital with an orientation to retain it inside the firm. The hypothesis below is suggested in order to confirm whether these relations take place in Spanish hotels:

H4. There will be a positive relationship between investment in training and the development of TDHC training.

To ensure training effectiveness, training needs to be integrated into the strategic planning of a business (Schuler, 2000). The formalization of training and development becomes an indicator of the relative importance that training has within the organization (Garavan, 1991) and equally suggests a systematic – as opposed to an ad hoc – approach to human capital development (Mabey and Gooderham, 2005; Nikandrou et al., 2008). Therefore, in our opinion, hotels which follow a differentiation strategy structure their training policy through a formal planning linked to the firm's strategic aims and, consequently, develop a training strategy which pays

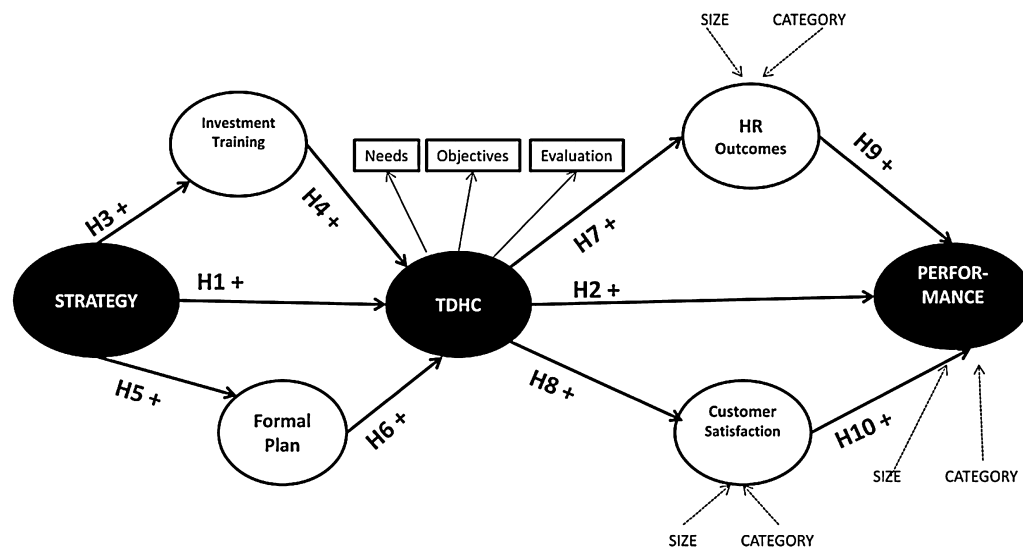


Fig. 1. Theoretical model.

more attention to human capital development. The following two hypotheses are put forward to verify this possible relationship:

H5. There will be a positive relationship between the differentiation strategy and formal training.

H6. There will be a positive relationship between formal training and TDHC.

It is also worth mentioning that some of the recent publications devoted to HRM are critical about the direct relationship between HRM and performance (Kehoe and Wright, 2013; Sun et al., 2007), highlighting that a number of intermediate results exist between them, such as HR Outcomes. As pointed out by Bowen and Ostroff (2004), employees' attitudinal and behavioral responses to human resource practices depend on the human resource practices that employees perceive to exist in their own work context. Thus, for example, Roehl and Swerdlow (1999) found that training policy contributes to achieve a higher degree of employee commitment to the organization, and De Dreu et al. (2008) highlight that training positively impacts on the emotional state of employees. The following hypothesis stems from this line of reasoning. In this research, we consider that the training will have a positive effect on the HR Outcomes (hypothesis 7). We considering these results as a latent variable composed of three reflective items: If training has contributed to (1) achieving higher levels worker satisfaction, (2) achieving higher worker participation levels and (3) improving work environment (see section measurement of variables).

H7. There will be a positive relationship between TDHC and HR Outcomes.

It has been argued that training plays an essential role in delivering the strategic objectives set by managers in tourism (Eaglen et al., 2000). High-quality training contributes not only to employees' human capital, enhancing performance, commitment, and retention, but also to customer satisfaction (Blake et al., 2006). The development of employee skills also appears as a core element of many regeneration strategies for businesses, and regarding the impacts on businesses' performance via improvements in service quality (Thomas and Long, 2001) and, therefore, customer satisfaction. The following hypothesis is put forward for this purpose:

H8. There will be a positive relationship between TDHC and Customer Satisfaction.

Dyer and Reeves (1995) posited four sequential levels in relation to the impact of HR practices – HR (or employee), organizational, financial, and market-related – suggesting that HR practices are likely to work outward (and upward) through these levels and hence, most immediately, through their effects on employees' attitudes and behaviors. Similarly, Becker et al. (1997) suggested that HR practices influence employee behaviors, which subsequently affect operational, financial, and share price performance outcomes. The following hypothesis is suggested with a view to verify this relationship.

H9. There will be a positive relationship between HR Outcomes and firm performance.

As suggested by the service-profit chain, the relationship between customer satisfaction and financial performance should be positive (Bernhardt et al., 2000; Nelson et al., 1992; Davidson, 2003). Several other researchers suggest that the relationship between customer satisfaction and financial performance may not be positive (Tornow and Wiley, 1991; Wiley, 1991). Bernhardt et al. (2000) claim that, while these findings might seem counter-intuitive, they may not be so surprising. For example, Gursoy and Swanger (2007) argue that, whereas customer satisfaction lies at the very core of hospitality operations, customer satisfaction may not result in higher financial performance because it is considered a 'given' factor – an expected and natural part of day-to-day operations. Since consumers expect to be satisfied when they patronize any service businesses, hospitality and tourism businesses cannot survive without meeting customers' demands. Although many actions undertaken by hotel firms might hide this link between customer satisfaction and performance such as, for example, making investments in staff training that could lead to an increased level of customer satisfaction but which, in the short term, may not materialize in better hotel performance. Even though many actions of a company lie beyond the scope of customer satisfaction and may have a significant impact on profits, customer satisfaction is still likely to play a significant role in a company's financial success. Therefore, this study hypothesizes a significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and financial returns (Chi and Gursoy, 2009).

H10. There will be a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and firm performance.

The theoretical model to be contrasted appears in Fig. 1.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and data collection

3.1.1. The hotel industry in the Valencian Autonomous Region

This study was carried out in the *Comunidad Valenciana* (Valencian Autonomous Region) – one of the Spanish regions where tourism has become a strategic sector. This territory ranks third among domestic tourism destinations and fifth among the favorite destinations of foreign tourists. Tourism generates 12% of the regional GDP and 12% of its employment; and, most importantly, the Valencian tourism sector accounts for 11.5% of the Spanish GDP (Instituto de Estudios Turísticos, 2012). A ‘sun and beach’ model oriented to mass demand segments and offered at highly competitive prices has prevailed in the Valencian Region for a long time. As result of this competitive model, the hotels of Valencian Autonomous Region show an employment profile which is quite close to the normal behavior of the hotel industry (hard approach to HRM). This model of human resource management is characterized by an emphasis on the short term, the pursuit of efficiency and cost savings. However, as [Marco-Lajara and Úbeda-García \(2013\)](#) conclude, we should guide the study of the human resource management of the hotels in this region focusing more soft variables as in our case training, and considering the hotel’s strategy ([Fig. 2](#)).

A number of different databases were used to define our study population (e.g. municipal supply of tourism, Turespaña, or Iberian Balance Sheet Analysis System-SABI for its acronym in Spanish). The total number of hotels belonging to the accommodation sector in Valencia amounts to 727. Our study population includes all hotel categories (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 stars) seeking to obtain a representative sample of the hotels located in the geographical territory under analysis. In this respect, one-star hotels account for 16% of the study population; two-star ones represent 25.17%; three-star ones reach 34.8%; four-star hotels correspond to 21.5%; and, finally, the percentage of five-star hotel is situated at 2.53%. Similar studies have included all of these categories, for instance, that written by [Orfila-Sintes et al. \(2005\)](#). The total number of companies participating in the study was 112, which represents 15.4% of the total population and a sampling error of 8.6% to 95.5% for the survey as a whole. The distribution of establishments according to this category is shown in [Table 1](#).



Fig. 2. Research territory.

Table 1
Population and sample distribution by category.

Establishment category	Number of hotels	
	Population	Sample
1 star	116	18
2 stars	183	28
3 stars	253	39
4 stars	157	24
5 stars	18	3
Total	727	112

Table 2
Sample data.

	Media
Number of employees	21.14
Number bedrooms	77.23
Number beds	158.71
% Permanent staff	38.12%
Differentiation strategy	65.18%
• 1 star	38.80%
• 2 star	57.14%
• 3 star	71.80%
• 4 star	79.16%
• 5 star	100%

3.2. Data collection

Data collection was possible through a questionnaire on which a consensus had been previously reached between experts in the human resource and training areas and tourism sector professionals. The preparation of a preliminary questionnaire led to a pre-test with 15 respondents which made it easier to delimit the items that were finally included in the questionnaire. Interviews were held during this pre-test with the human resource managers of 15 hotels, as well as with representatives of the most relevant professional associations in this sector within the territory analyzed. These interviews allowed us to verify the extent to which the measurements made were suited to our research goals. Furthermore, since some of the scales utilized have been used in research works outside the hotel industry, an attempt was made to check whether such scales could be applied to the firms included in our study population. The final questionnaire can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

The validated questionnaire was sent to hotel CEOs through different ways; first by post to all the hotels included in the population – subsequently followed by a reminder e-mail after one week. Attached to the questionnaire was a stamped addressed envelope for respondents to return the questionnaire once it had been completed, together with a cover letter which explained the purpose of our survey to the recipients while simultaneously guaranteeing data confidentiality, as the results would be made public only in aggregate form. Recipients also had the opportunity to obtain the survey results if the latter were of interest to them. Taking into account the response rate, a second selective sending was carried out seeking to cover the population strata, and due to the difficulty in obtaining a response from some of them, a decision was finally made to contact some establishments by telephone so as to ensure their collaboration.

The collection of questionnaires requested by e-mail was performed using the web page of the *Observatorio Turístico de la Comunidad Valenciana* [Valencian Region Tourism Observatory]. Data collection took place during the months of September and October 2011. A number of descriptive sample data are provided in [Table 2](#).

4. Measurement of variables

This section has as its aim to explain the measurement indicators used.

Hotel strategy. The literature primarily established two procedures to measure the strategy followed by a firm: (1) using a nominal description of possible strategies and asking the respondent to select one (Peck, 1994); and (2) asking the respondent to assess different items related to competitive factors (Segev, 1989). A decision was made to use the second option in our paper. Three items adapted from the works by Segev (1989), Shortell and Zajac (1990) and Miller and Roth (1994) served to assess the differentiation strategy. A 0-to-10 Likert-type scale was used in the options provided for each questionnaire item, where a zero value means a complete lack of importance for the firm's competitiveness and a 10 value suggests that it is a very significant factor when it comes to firm competitiveness (see Appendix 1). These factors shaping the strategy construct were modeled as reflective.

Training investment. This variable was measured using two reflective indicators: the percentage of resources with respect to the sales level that the hotel had dedicated to staff training during the previous year and the proportion of employees who received training in the course of last year.

Formal training. This construct was also developed from two reflective indicators, namely: the firm annually draws up training plans; and training within the organization has business strategy as its starting point.

Training for the Development of Human Capital (TDHC). The construction of this variable was based on indicators corresponding to the most important phases in the training process: detection of training needs; training goals; and evaluation (Úbeda, 2005). A factor analysis helped us validate the scale utilized. Three factors corresponding to the three aforesaid phases were extracted which accounted for 70.58% of the variance. This led us to decide that the variable TDHC would be conceived as a second-order construct formed by the three dimensions resulting from factor analysis: training needs; goals; and evaluation. The fact that PLS does not permit to provide a direct representation of second-order factors made us firstly proceed to calculate the factor analysis scores for first-order constructs – which were subsequently used as reflective indicators of second-order factors (Chin et al., 2003; Bock et al., 2005). Table 3 shows the specific items that shape each indicator.

*Performance.*¹ The construction of this variable was based on three reflective indicators: increasing profit; increasing the number of customers; and reducing labor absenteeism levels (see Appendix 1). Exactly like the two preceding ones, this index results from the adaptation of some scales used in previous studies (Sanz-Valle et al., 1999; Úbeda, 2005; Úbeda-García et al., 2013). In relation to the possible existence of bias in the interviewees' perception responses when assessing these items, quite a few studies have confirmed that perception measurements constitute a highly valid representation of organizational performance (Ngo et al., 1998; Khatri, 2000; Hartog and Verburg (2004)). Thus, the utilization of these measures which seeks to estimate the organization's performance through its managers' perception has proved particularly useful when it comes to assessing the impact of various organizational practices on firm performance (Ketokivi and Schroeder, 2004). Such measures help

obtain answers in the survey items which usually present a low response index; they also prove useful when it comes to achieving valid and important answers regarding certain performance measures, as could be product or service quality, customer fidelization or profit growth, amongst others – hence our decision to use these measures to measure HR and customer satisfaction outcomes too, as shown below.

HR Outcomes. The elaboration of this construct took as its reference the scores within a 0-to-10 scale given to the effects that training policy had had on the following variables: achieving higher worker satisfaction levels; achieving higher worker participation levels; and improving work environment (see Appendix 1). This index also results from the adaptation of some scales used in previous studies (Sanz-Valle et al., 1999; Úbeda, 2005; Úbeda-García et al., 2013).

Customer satisfaction. This variable was modeled from three items that relate training policy to customer satisfaction. The respondent was asked to assess the extent to which the training policy developed had contributed to: improving service quality; providing faster service/attention to customers; and reducing the number of customer complaints and claims (see Appendix 1). The same as in other cases above, this index is also the result of adapting some scales used in previous research works (Sanz-Valle et al., 1999; Úbeda, 2005; Úbeda-García et al., 2013).

5. Control variables

Hotel size. A number of works dedicated to the hotel sector – such as those carried out by Brown and Dev (1999) and Pine and Phillips (2005) – find a significant connection between size and some hotel productivity indicators. That is the reason why this variable was introduced as a control variable, seeking to prevent it from distorting the relationships between training policy and performance and using the number of employees as its measure.

Category. Hotel category has hardly been used among the research works focused on the hotel industry; as a matter of fact, few studies have incorporated it for studying differences in profitability across hotels. Examples are those written by Brown and Dev (1999) and Pine and Phillips (2005), the conclusion of which is: the higher the hotel category, the higher the performance level reached. This variable was also introduced as a control variable in our study, measuring it as low-category (1- and 2-star hotels); medium category (3-star hotels); and high category (4- and 5-star hotels).

6. Data analysis results and discussion

The working hypothesis presented in Fig. 1 was tested using the partial least squares (PLS) multivariate analysis technique for testing structural models (Wold, 1985) applied to estimate models containing latent constructs indirectly measured by multiple indicators (Wold, 1982). This technique – a tool primarily designed for predictive causal analysis when complex problems are examined, as is the case in our research – uses a component-based approach to estimation, which is why it places minimal demands on sample size and residual distributions and allows for the use of both formative and reflective measures, something not generally achievable with covariance-based structural equation modeling techniques such as LISREL or AMOS (Chin, 1998). The PLS-Graph software version 2.0 was selected to carry out our study.

Indicators can be modeled as reflective or formative in PLS (Fornell, 1982). Reflective indicators are determined by construction and co-vary construct level. The use of formative indicators implies that the construct is expressed as a function of the manifest variables – the observed variables are, cause or precede this

¹ Subjective performance measures were used in this research study on the assumption that, given the senior executive involved, respondents had sufficient perspective and information to assess their firms' performance relative to competitors (Powell and Dent-Mitcallef, 1997). Subjective measures have been widely used in organizational research (Dess, 1987; Powell, 1992). A lot of studies find high convergent validity between subjective and objective measures (Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1987; Hart and Banbury, 1994; Powell and Dent-Mitcallef, 1997).

Table 3
Measures.

Key constructs	Indicators	Loading (λ)	T value	α Cronbach	Composite reliability	AVE
Differentiation strategy (STRATEGY)	S1	0.755	59.7243	0.7206	0.8171***	0.603
	S2	0.885	141.7772			
	S3	0.701	39.9827			
Training investment	TI1	0.956	675.6506	0.9099	0.9569***	0.9173
	TI2	0.969	762.0444			
Formal plan	FT1	0.908	373.3164	0.7085	0.8713***	0.7722
	FT2	0.848	112.6949			
Training Develop Human Capital (TDHC) Needs	N1	0.897	391.91	0.8786	0.9252***	0.805
	N2	0.950				
	N3	0.879				
	N4	0.846				
Objectives	O1	0.897	277.4873			
	O2	0.921				
	O3	0.893				
	O4	0.984				
Evaluation	E1	0.792	163.7003			
	E2	0.874				
	E3	0.952				
	E4	0.983				
HR Outcomes	HRO1	0.951	396.9329	0.7716	0.8483***	0.565
	HRO2	0.895	168.8792			
	HRO3	0.930	299.892			
Customer Satisfaction	CS1	0.861	164.3113	0.7358	0.8220***	0.5057
	CS2	0.884	220.5724			
	CS3	0.816	176.2817			
PERFORMANCE	P1	0.931	379.0565	0.7844	0.8523***	0.5609
	P2	0.896	147.2321			
	P3	0.875	214.8585			

*** $p < 0.001$ (based on $t(4999)$, one-tailed test $t(0.001;4999) = 3.09186345$).

construction. Since the latent variable is seen as an effect and not as a cause of the responses shown by indicators, these indicators are not necessarily correlated with one another, i.e. each indicator can occur independently of the others (Chin and Gopal, 1995).

As shown above in our description of the measures used, all the constructs utilized in the present research have been modeled with reflective indicators.

The assessment of the measuring model in the PLS technique requires two essential stages:

The first stage consists in evaluating the individual reliability of indicators through the value of their loads (λ). In this sense, all loads exceed the value of 0.7 – as is recommended in the bibliography (see Table 3). This first stage also has to include evaluating scales through Cronbach's α index and through the composite reliability (CR) index, and the existence of convergent validity was verified through the analysis of the average variance extracted (AVE). Table 3 shows that both α and CR values exceeded 0.7 in every variable, and the AVE value was above 0.5. Finally, this stage is completed with the verification about the existence of discriminant validity. The most widely accepted method consists in comparing the AVE value for each one of the constructs to the square of the correlation of that same construct with each one of the other variables. Therefore, if AVE is higher than the square correlation, it can

be accepted that each construct correlates more intensely with its own measures than with those corresponding to the other variables (Barclay et al., 1995). Table 4 presents the square root of AVE in the diagonal, and the estimated correlations for each pair of constructs in the elements outside the diagonal. These data confirm the existence of discriminant validity across constructs.

The second stage consists in the evaluation of the structural model. The aim is to test the hypotheses and find out whether the proposed model is in keeping with the data. The evaluation of the structural model is carried out through the observation of R^2 ; this value indicates the part of the variance in the dependent constructs that is explained by the independent variables (indicators) used in the model. The higher the value of R^2 , the better the proposed model will be. It is theoretically suggested that the value of R^2 should be higher than or equal to 0.1. The R^2 values obtained can be seen in Table 6. On the other hand, the goodness of a model is equally determined through the strength of each path (β) or the relationships between constructs. β coefficients act as the path coefficients which indicate the relative strengths of statistical relationships. The variance in an endogenous construct explained by another latent variable is given by the absolute value which results from multiplying the path coefficient (β) by the corresponding correlation coefficient between both variables. It is suggested that this

Table 4
Measuring instrument: discriminant validity.

	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	STRATEGY	FORMAL PLAN	HR OUTCOMES	INVEST TRAINING	PERFORMANCE	TDHC
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	0.7111	0	0	0	0	0	0
STRATEGY	0.6046	0.7756	0	0	0	0	0
FORMAL PLAN	0.4247	0.4382	0.8787	0	0	0	0
HR OUTCOMES	0.8581	0.6498	0.5093	0.7516	0	0	0
INVEST TRAINING	0.5503	0.5861	0.8246	0.5362	0.9577	0	0
PERFORMANCE	0.8631	0.6141	0.5167	0.839	0.5671	0.7489	0
TDHC	0.6988	0.7914	0.772	0.7497	0.8743	0.7338	0.8971

The bold diagonal appears the square root of the variance extracted (AVE).

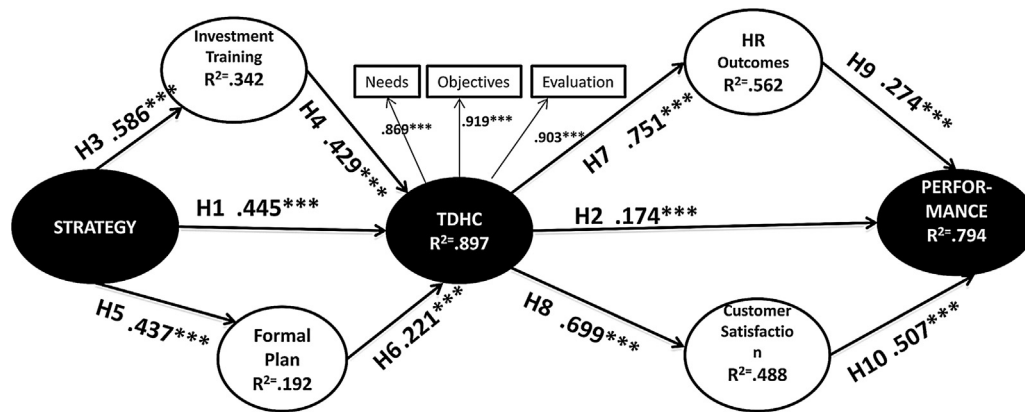


Fig. 3. Structural model results.

coefficient should at least reach a value of 0.2 (see Table 6). Finally, the quality of this model is also determined through the Stone-Geisser test (Q^2), which should be above zero ($Q^2 > 0$, see Table 6).

Fig. 3 shows the variance explained (R^2) in the dependent constructs and path coefficients (β) for this model. A bootstrapping (5000 resamples) was carried out to obtain standard errors and t -statistics (Chin, 1998) with a view to assess the statistical significance of path coefficients (Table 5).

The amount of variance explained by the final model is (R^2) 0.794. The model proposed here shows hotel performance as being explained by three variables, namely: customer satisfaction; HR Outcomes; and training policy oriented to human capital development (TDHC). The contribution made by each one of these variables to the final result would be determined by the product between the path and the correlation between that variable and performance. In our case, it would be:

TDHC: path (0.174)* TDHC-PERFORMANCE correlation (0.7338) = 0.1277.

HR OUTCOMES: path (0.274)* HR OUTCOMES-PERFORMANCE correlation (0.839) = 0.2299.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: path (0.507)* CUSTOMER SATISFACTION-PERFORMANCE correlation (0.8631) = 0.4376.

6.1. Differentiation strategy and TDHC

Our intention in this paper was to apply the contingent approach to the examination of the relationship between training policy and organizational results within a sample of Spanish hotels. More precisely, the specific aim sought was to verify if a hotel's strategic orientation (focused on differentiation or costs) entails the implementation of different training policies. In this sense, the results obtained clearly show that the training policy undertaken by hotels following a differentiation strategy – in addition to being more oriented toward human capital development (TDHC) – is characterized by a more proactive detection of training needs, the establishment of a wide range of training objectives meant to satisfy both current and future needs and also to motivate staff, and, finally, the development of a training activity which concentrates not only on methodological design and the cost-benefit relationship but also on staff motivation and the contribution made by training in the hotel's long-term operation. Therefore, our findings are in tune with those obtained in other previous studies where the contingent approach was advocated (Camps and Luna-Arocas, 2009; Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Arthur, 1992; Peck, 1994; Hoque, 1999).

6.2. TDHC, HR Outcomes, Customer Satisfaction, and Performance

The results obtained support the causal relationship between training strategy (TDHC) and hotel performance. Thus, 12.77% of the variance in the 'Performance' variable would be explained by the direct effect of a training policy committed to staff proactivity, polyvalency, and motivation. Such results additionally confirm the contributions made by authors such as Kehoe and Wright (2013) or Sun et al. (2007), as performance is affected by other mediating variables too; among them, HR Outcomes and Customer Satisfaction. It can therefore be concluded that, although training policy on its own does influence performance, in fact, its strongest impact is felt through the influence that it exerts on staff motivation and involvement, as well as on customer satisfaction.

With regard to the influence exerted by TDHC on HR Outcomes and Customer Satisfaction, the results obtained in our study reveal a highly positive relationship for both variables. It could consequently be stated that the said results are consistent with the postulates of Harel and Tzafir (1999), according to whom training can influence performance in two possible ways: firstly, training improves relevant skills and abilities; and secondly, training increases employees' satisfaction with their current job and work position.

6.3. Differentiation strategy, investment in training, and TDHC

The results of this research allow us to conclude that those Spanish hotels which follow a differentiation strategy allocate more money to the development of human resource training, which is in keeping with the findings of other studies (Black and Lynch, 2001; Kydd and Oppenheim, 1990; Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Munoz Castellanos and Salinero Martín, 2011). Perhaps most interestingly, though, it is worth highlighting the positive causal between investment in training and the actual type of training (TDHC), since it is easy for us to conclude that the greatest economic effort in training programs is made on training oriented to human capital development, which in turn leads us to infer that these hotels perceive training as a long-term investment and consequently bet on the creation of specific human capital.

6.4. Differentiation strategy, formal training, and TDHC

Hotels following a differentiation strategy show a more systematic approach to human resource development, undertaking formal training schemes integrated into business strategic plans, as suggested by Nikandrou et al. (2008). Another interesting conclusion relates the existence of formal plans to TDHC. In this respect, the results allow us to assume that an extremely significant causal

Table 5
Structural model results.

Hypothesis	Suggested effect	Path coeficientes	t-Value (bootstrap)	Support
H1: STRATEGY>TDHC	+	0.445	64.7534***	Yes
H2: TDHC>PERFORMANCE	+	0.174	12.0664***	Yes
H3: STRATEGY>INVESTMENT	+	0.586	61.328***	Yes
H4: INVESTMENT>TDHC	+	0.429	41.9531***	Yes
H5: STRATEGY>FORMAL PLAN	+	0.437	41.2485***	Yes
H6: FORMAL PLAN>TDHC	+	0.221	24.4223***	Yes
H7: TDHC> HR OUTCOMES	+	0.751	76.805***	Yes
H8: TDHC> CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	+	0.699	75.8528***	Yes
H9: HR OUTCOMES> PERFORMANCE	+	0.274	7.8225***	Yes
H10: CLIENT SATISFACTION> PERFORMANCE	+	0.507	20.5173***	Yes

*** $p < 0.001$ (based on $t(4999)$, one-tailed test $t(0.001;4999) = 3.09186345$).

relationship exists between the drawing-up of a formal plan and the implementation of training oriented to human capital development in Spanish hotels. The conclusion is clear; a training activity can only be proactive and oriented toward the development and maintenance of strategic competences if it starts from a systematic and reflexive process focused on what the hotel is and what it plans to be; in other words, an ad hoc approach to human capital development is no good.

6.5. HR Outcomes, Customer Satisfaction, and Performance

As mentioned above, the impact of training on performance is affected by a number of intermediate variables such as HR Outcomes and Customer Satisfaction; the conclusions drawn from our study show that these two variables are positively correlated with performance. More precisely, HR Outcomes explains 22.99% of performance whereas Customer Satisfaction accounts for 43.76% (see Table 6). Especially the first of these findings confirms two relevant aspects in the area of human resource management. Firstly, that the human resource practices implemented by hotels influence their employees' perceptions and behaviors; and, secondly, that the actions of employees in service firms – and especially within the hotel industry – directly impact on their organization's results. This conclusion had previously been reached by authors such as Bitner et al. (1990), Nickson et al. (2002) and Schneider et al. (2003).

6.6. Needs, objectives, evaluation, and TDHC

It is finally important for us to describe the causal relationships respectively found between: detection of training needs; training goals and evaluation; and TDHC. All three relationships have proved to be positive and significant (see Table 4), which suggests that implementing a training policy oriented to human capital development inevitably requires adopting a procedure to detect training needs which should at least cover aspects such as the following: the firm's general planning; the identification of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that employees need in order to carry out their current professional activity properly; the identification of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that employees are going to need in order to carry out their professional activity properly in the future, when changes take place inside the organization; the qualification requirements made explicit by the actual staff.²

Once the training plan goals have been established, it will be necessary to consider not only the specific pedagogical aims corresponding to each activity but also other more generic aims focused

on: adapting the staff to the foreseen changes; improving staff polyvalency; motivating and increasing job satisfaction and enhancing staff involvement levels in the organization.

As for evaluation, it also shows a positive relationship with TDHC; hence the pressing need to include aspects such as those listed below in the feedback of the training imparted: methodological design (contents, teaching staff, materials, etc.); cost-benefit relationship; impact caused by training on employee motivation and the contribution made by training to the firm's long-term evolution.

The last result seemed particularly striking to us because, although firms often dedicate little effort to training activity evaluation, the data drawn from the present study identify this stage of the training plan as the most important one for TDHC implementation. This finding leads us to think that evaluation turns out to be extremely important when it comes to establishing a continuum for training activity, ensuring that the latter does not work as an isolated development largely unconnected from business operation. In fact, this result helps us suggest human resource managers that it is extremely important for them to evaluate training programs, since a large part of the criticism received by this policy stems from the lack of assessment about training programs (Alliger et al., 1997; Wright and Geroy, 2001) and, therefore, from the fact that these managers do not know whether the expenses derived from staff training helps them reach their business objectives. In fact, most of the firms that evaluate training only use questionnaires self-administered to students, and very few firms measure the impact of training on performance (Alliger et al., 1997; Kraiger et al., 2004).

7. Conclusions, limitations, and future directions

Some authors question the role of human resources as an important factor in customer satisfaction, service quality, and organizational performance (Lee-Ross and Johns, 1997; Losekoot et al., 2001; Nickson et al., 2002). The present study actually provides evidence of the pre-eminent role that human resources – together with their management – play in the profitability of hotel industry firms.

It was additionally decided to use the contingent approach, since the need to align approaches to HR with business strategy becomes even more crucial in service organizations, because of the role that employees – particularly those who interact directly with customers – have in determining service quality (Kelliher and Perrett, 2001). It has thus been confirmed that the type of strategy adopted by hotels does influence training policy development. This outcome confirms the ones obtained by Hoque (1999) for the hotel industry, which lead him to conclude that the relationship between HRM and organizational performance depends on the business strategy followed by the hotel, and also that hotels using HRM approaches with a focus on quality within their business strategy outperform those

² The introduction of this factor in the detection of training needs follows the recommendations made by Frash et al. (2008), according to whom hospitality companies should make sure that their HR departments design training in close harmony with frontline employees in order to improve the transfer of training to the work position.

Table 6
Effects on endogenous variables.

	R ²	Q ²	Direct effect	Correlation	Variance explained
INVESTMENT STRATEGY	0.342	0.3132	0.586	0.6026	35.31%
FORMAL PLAN STRATEGY	0.192	0.1440	0.437	0.4372	19.10%
TDHC STRATEGY	0.897	0.4195	0.445	0.7928	35.27%
INVESTMENT FORMAL PLAN			0.429	0.8716	37.39%
HR OUTCOMES	0.562	0.3172	0.221	0.7694	17.00%
TDHC			0.751	0.7509	56.40%
CLIENT SATISFACTION	0.488	0.2376	0.699	0.6993	48.88%
TDHC					
PERFORMANCE	0.794	0.4195	0.174	0.7338	12.77%
TDHC			0.274	0.839	22.99%
HR OUTCOMES			0.507	0.8631	43.76%
CLIENT SATISFACTION					

which do not adopt such approaches. Research into other sectors has also obtained results which coincide with those drawn from this paper. Examples can be found in the studies by Arthur (1992), Peck (1994), Delery and Doty (1996), Black and Lynch (2001), Osterman (1995), Aragón-Sánchez et al. (2003) and Kruse et al. (2004).

On the other hand, the results obtained show us that, as has just been explained, a direct relationship exists between training and performance; nevertheless, training policy exerts an indirect influence upon results through intermediate variables such as human resource (HR) outcomes and customer satisfaction. The presence of these variables which mediate between human resource policies and business performance has been analyzed in numerous works both in the hotel industry and in other sectors – the results obtained showing a coincidence with our conclusions (Anderson et al., 1994; Worsfold, 1999; Haynes and Fryer, 2000; Hoque, 2000; Lucas and Deery, 2004; Lee et al., 2005; Schneider et al., 2003; Katou and Budhwar, 2006; Khatri, 2000; Lee et al., 2000; Gill et al., 2004; Sheng and Lin, 2004; Chand, 2010).

It could be stated in this respect that the type of strategy determines not only the kind of training but also its implementation; in other words, how training needs are detected, what type of aims are set, and the way in which the imparted training is assessed; these results validate the contingent approach postulates about human resource management (Schuler and Jackson, 1987; Schuler et al., 1989; Chan et al., 2004 or Peña and Villasalero, 2010). To this must be added that the strategic orientation determines the effort made in training, which explains why hotels following a differentiation strategy carry out a greater outlay for the implementation of training schemes oriented to human capital development, and these schemes form part of the hotel's strategic plans – all of which reflects a systematic approach to training. The existence of such a relationship finds support as well in previous research studies, for instance, those written by Black and Lynch (2001), Schuler and Jackson (1987), Kydd and Oppenheim (1990) or Munoz Castellanos and Salinero Martín (2011).

Our research results confirm some of the theses put forward in preceding works; for example the study carried out by Watson and D'Annunzio-Green (1996) who showed that hotel companies use training programs to develop a culture of quality service in their businesses. Similar results were obtained by Haynes and Fryer (2000), as well as by Harrington and Akehurst (1996). A research study by Schneider and Bowen (1995) emphasizes the importance of training focused on knowledge and appropriate to the specific characteristics and business strategy skills. Redman and Mathews (1998) stress the importance of training for interpersonal skills and teamwork, as many service organizations rely on teams to address the wide variety of customer needs. This has also led to the need for multi-skilling employees so that they can perform all functions

and be trained on how to manage diversity (Baum et al., 1997; Schneider and Bowen, 1995). Empirical support for these views was found in our research work, since a positive causal relationship exists between strategy and the type of training developed (TDHC). Considering the way in which the TDHC variable was built, it could be inferred that the training policy undertaken by firms with a differentiation strategy is oriented toward the short and long term, placing the emphasis on employees' commitment both to the firm and to increased polyvalency (see Table 3 TDHC indicators).

It is equally worth highlighting that training policy has a direct bearing on performance, though the greatest weight in this variable becomes apparent through intermediate result variables such as HR Outcomes and Customer Satisfaction.

7.1. Managerial implications

The hotel sector – and, consequently, hotel firms – shape the most important economic sector within Spain's tourism sector, given the predominant role as a recipient of tourists played by this country. It is an extremely competitive industry due – from an internal point of view – to an excessive hotel capacity and, from an external point of view, to the globalization process that is increasing the number of agents inside this sector in numerous markets. For this reason, Spanish hotel firms have recently been betting on the adaptation of their strategies in order to remain competitive. The competition model for the Spanish tourist industry as a whole and for the Valencian Region in particular has traditionally been based on cost leadership, as well as on an orientation toward the mass 'sun and beach' market. However, this strategy no longer suffices and a transition has been taking place toward a differentiation strategy. Human capital qualification policy must play a predominant role in this change of strategic orientation. In our opinion, and from a practical point of view, our research could have important implications for the way in which training policy should be approached in hotels following a differentiation strategy.

The general conditions under the human resources are management in the territory studied have a traditional orientation and short-term focused, as we discussed in the methodology section; however, this research shows that under the conditions of analyzing training policy in hotels that follow a differentiation strategy, this policy adopts sort oriented approach to long term. Specifically, this paper has found empirical support to claim that those hotel firms which follow a differentiation strategy develop a training policy other than the traditional qualification model, and that the said policy positively impacts on customer satisfaction as well as on human resource outcomes and hotel performance. That is why some corollaries are presented next in the hope that they can

provide some practical help when it comes to approaching and developing training policy in hotel firms.

In the first place, the detection of *training needs* must have a proactive character, for which purpose training must be linked to business strategic aims both in the short and in the long term. These longer-term vision will have to materialize in *formal training plans*, established for specific periods which comprise the formative activities needed to reach the organization's overall aims. Training cannot be conceived as an isolated, one-off activity meant to achieve an immediate person-workplace fit only when it is necessary.

As a consequence of the above, *the aims* set in training should have a broader character and cannot be confined to the aforesaid firm; instead, it is essential for training actions to promote polyvalency, motivation and the staff's commitment to the firm. Enlarging the set of objectives will allow us to ensure that training has an influence on ability and motivation, as well as opportunity (the AMO perspective) and, therefore, on HR outcomes, and ultimately on performance.

Furthermore, the evaluation of the training imparted becomes essential within the formative process. Executives need to bear in mind that an appropriate assessment of training not only consists in obtaining some feedback about trainees' perception and reactions. Evaluation is the stage which gives validity to the whole formative effort made and permits to achieve continuity in the organization's qualification level. Obviously, the development of this type of training – referred to as training oriented toward the development of human capital (TDHC) here – must be backed by the other human resource policies (those focused on talent attraction and retention) so that its approach oriented to the long term as well as to the development of specific human capital inside the organization can be successful.

7.2. Limitations

The most important limitations found in this research work are presented below. A first limitation is determined by the

technique of analysis used: structural equation, since it assumes the linearity of the relationship between the latent variables. The references for the study were measurements based on individuals' perceptions. Therefore, it should be considered that the perceptions of respondents cannot provide a completely accurate picture of reality. The research focuses on the study of a Spanish region and specifically refers to the hotel industry; therefore, the conclusions must be placed within that particular territorial and sectorial context.

Our study focuses on the analysis of variables which are implicit in the development of training policies and neglects other factors, including the individual characteristics of workers or the teaching methods used, which also play a relevant role in training effectiveness, as some authors have already shown (Colquitt et al., 2000; Tews and Tracey, 2008). Moreover, only the effects of the 'training' variable in organizational performance are contrasted in the present paper even though, to our mind, a significant synergistic effect derives from considering a HR practice system consistent (configurational perspective). However, that lies beyond the scope of our paper.

The limitations outlined may be the new paths for the future development of this work. For example, the study could eventually be tested in the whole of Spain or in other countries. It would also be of great interest to compare the results obtained in this research with comparable studies on other productive sectors. In our opinion, it is important to do further research into the contingent approach to human resource management, and more precisely to training policy, not only regarding the implementation of human resource practices and their differences according to strategy, but also in terms of training policy formulation; that is, to try and verify whether the implementation and success of training schemes oriented to the development of specific human capital may influence the hotel's future choice of a competitive strategy. Checking this aspect is one of the main ways for human resource management to acquire the importance and relevance that it deserves, as a result of which it will also be possible to support competitive advantage on intangible person-based assets.

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