Talent management strategies and practices in the age of digital transformation: Building bridges to successful hospitality organisations in the UK, Greece, and Hong Kong

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Abstract

The paper examines Talent Management strategies and practices in the age of digital transformation in 3, 4, and 5-star hotels in the UK, Greece, and Hong Kong. Using a mixed-methods research approach, the study first conducted an online survey with 63 participants from hotels in the countries mentioned above. Secondly, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with UK hotel professionals. The results show that hotels that are more mature in digitalisation and digitisation have created a culture of confidence and trust in technology which is conducive to integrating emerging technologies and AI in Talent Management strategies and practices. This is a pilot study that aims to understand the stage in which hotel companies are currently in the digital transformation of TM.

Key Words:

Talent Management (TM), artificial intelligence (AI), hospitality industry, TAM, UTAUT

Introduction

We live in the age of changing mindsets and the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies in all industries around the world. The penetration of advanced technologies in the form of digitisation and automation of processes in the management of human resources in the hospitality industry, as in all sectors of the economy, is identified as one of the new and necessary challenges in the sector (Promsri, 2019; Verhoef et al., 2021). The application of AI and emerging technologies has become evident for HRM strategies such as talent acquisition (Johnson et al., 2020; Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020), talent training and development (Aguinis et al., 2024), talent retention (Kim et al., 2024; Stone et al., 2024). However, it is not certain that employees are aware of the benefits and have accepted advanced technology with equal enthusiasm to what the current narrative claims. The Technology Acceptance Theory (TAM) (Davis, 1989) highlights challenges to be overcome, so that resourcing and managing talents can benefit from digital transformation. This paper addresses the gap by providing an analysis of how emerging technologies and AI impact Talent Management (TM) strategies of recruitment, development, and retention in UK, Greek, and Hong Kong hotel organisations. The study answers the following research questions using mixed methods approach:

1. How much are hotels aware of emerging technologies and AI in talent management and what are their perspectives in using them?
2. What types of emerging technologies and AI do hotels use and to what extent are they used in talent management?
3. What strategies and with what consistency do hotels use emerging technologies and AI in the recruitment, development, and retention of talents?

Literature Review

Digital, Digitalisation, Digital Transformation, and AI

Digitisation is a socio-technical process of converting analogue formats into digital ones (Sandberg et al., 2020) and applying digitalisation techniques to broader social and institutional contexts that make digital technologies infrastructural (Nylen & Holmström, 2015). Digital transformation is a profound change in organisational activities, boundaries, and goals to exploit the possibilities of digital technologies (Matt et al., 2015; Vial, 2019). AI is a decision-support tool that can be used for a wide range of business processes (Wirtz et al., 2018). The AI developed in recent years concerns such complex processes as classification, optimisation, estimation, and image recognition (Agrawal et al., 2019). Therefore, digital transformation is considered a broader concept than information technology-enabled (IT-enabled) organisational change (Vial, 2019), as it is deeply intertwined with multiple levels of organisational reality.

AI for Talent Acquisition

Digitalisation of TM mainly covers three core functions of HRM: hiring, training and development, and retention (Guerra, Danvilla-del-Valle & Mendez-Suarez, 2023). Beginning with recruitment and selection, AI is seen as a new building block that makes it possible to recruit talented employees more effectively. Khandelwal & Upadhyay (2021) claim that recruiting talent and managing diversity can be a major challenge and AI can successfully overcome these challenges. The benefits of using AI for this purpose are manifold. First, AI-based tools such as Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) enable HR managers to screen resumes, evaluate candidates, and predict the match with a job with remarkable accuracy (Agnihotri et al., 2023). Second, AI can be used to provide analysis based on interviews and organisational needs and suggest appropriate salaries and benefits based on candidates' qualifications (Chowdhury et al., 2022). Third, Van Esch et al. (2019) claim that candidates are more likely to apply online via social media, company websites, mobile applications, and chatbot talent assistants than through traditional recruitment methods.

AI for Talent Training and Development

AI is essential for the training and development of hospitality employees to improve their skills and provide them with an engaging environment (Faqihi & Miah, 2023). The integration of AI can create personalised learning paths that can develop skills, career goals, and performance data to recommend relevant courses and resources (Bashynska et al., 2023). Gamification helps employees to better understand their current skills and the different career paths within the organisation (Simpson & Jenkins, 2015). Chatbots can assess employees' skills, recommend training courses, and connect them with their mentors in the workplace (Nawaz & Gomes, 2019). The application of AR/VR can facilitate the design and delivery of training programmes at different stages of professional development. The use of various AI technologies can help organisations create a learning culture that can be inclusive and provide the ability to close training and development gaps (Kaushal et al., 2023).

AI for Talent Retention

Schiemann et al. (2018) have highlighted that the key to HR for organisations is employee retention, which leads to quality and higher profitability. The key to using AI effectively for employee retention lies in combining big data and machine learning with the human touch (Dorasami, 2021). In addition, AI predictive analytics algorithms identify individuals even before employees consciously intend to leave the company (Das et al. 2022). Through their day-to-day work and behaviour, employees give many signals about their intentions that allow companies to create predictive statistical models that

understand and predict turnover. This information can be used by managers to retain talented employees and offer tailored incentives, rewards, and recognition strategies (Grillo, 2015).

Accepting the use of advanced technology and AI

The adoption of technology in organisations does not occur automatically after operation systems adapt accordingly. Human actors first need to embrace it and endorse its applicability to their work. Technology Acceptance Theory (TAM) states that this is influenced by people's understanding that technology applications in question are useful for their work and easy to use (Davis, 1989). This is fundamentally based on the reasoned action theory (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) in which cognitive understandings of initiatives drive people's attitudes and behaviours. Digital transformation in hotel organisations, which belong to a labour-intensive industry, require more than establishing a technical capability in the workplace. The conditions in which it takes place also need to accommodate the needs of employees according to their positions, encouraging and motivating them to make best of use of them consistently (Ye & Chen, 2024). Therefore, according to the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003) acceptance of technology is a matter of what people expect of the outcomes from its use (performance expectancy), of the effort they put in it (effort expectancy), the support they receive from their community (social influence), and conditions in which use of technology takes place in their workplace (facilitating conditions).

Methodology

A mixed-method research approach was used in the study which ensured the validity of the data collected and the triangulation of results (Cresswell & Poth, 2016). The research was ethically approved by Birmingham City University.

First, the quantitative research stage used online survey approaching employees in 3- to 5-star hotels in the

UK, Greece, and Hong Kong. The survey took place in the first quarter of 2024. It was designed to measure the perceptions and usage of emerging technologies and AI in talent management, with reference to the technology use scale of the TAM (Davis, 1989) and UTAUT models (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

We adapted 8 questions from UTAUT to identity the performance and effort expectancy of using the emerging technologies (1 being 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 being 'Strongly Agree'). Respondents were also asked to rate the frequency on a Likert-type 7-point scale (1 being 'Never' and 7 being 'Always') with which their company uses 10 emerging technologies in TM. Adopting the statement that TM covers three core HRM functions: talent acquisition, development, and retention, several questions aimed to explore the frequency of use of AI specifically in the abovementioned functions. In addition, 7 questions centred around creating a work culture that encourages and facilitates employees to use technologies at work.

A total of 63 valid responses were received. Most respondents work in the UK (71.43%), with less coming from Greece (23.81%) and a few from Hong Kong (4.76%). The selection of those countries was based on two main arguments: (i) they reside in three very different cultural locations, so the findings could potentially show variations which can lead to useful discussions – UK being a very representative western country; Greece being a very traditional touristic destination of the Southeast Mediterranean; and Hong Kong being a progressed East-Asian destination with strong ties with the west. (ii) The researchers were very familiar with the hospitality management market of each one of those countries, so access to participants was easier. Most of the participants worked in companies with 50-299 employees (63.49%). For further characteristics of survey respondents, please refer to Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Demographic	Number	Percent
Gender:		
Male	41	65.08%
Female	22	34.92%
Age:		
18-24 years old	1	1.59%
25-34 years old	19	30.16%
35-44 years old	30	47.62%
45-54 years old	9	14.29%
Over 55 years old	4	6.35%
Education:		
Technical/vocational training or equivalent	18	28.57%
High school/college graduate	5	7.94%
Associate degree/diploma or equivalent	9	14.29%
Bachelor's degree	14	22.22%
Master's degree or above	17	26.98%
Job Rank:		
General staff	6	9.52%
Specialist	16	25.40%
Manager	23	36.51%
Senior Manager	12	19.05%
C-Level Executive (CEO, CMO, etc)	4	6.35%
Company Owner	2	3.17%
Work Location:		
UK	45	71.43%
Greece	15	23.81%
Hong Kong	3	4.76%
Company Size:		
1 – 49	1	1.59%
50 – 299	40	63.49%
300 – 999	17	26.98%
1,000 - 4,999	4	6.35%
5,000 or more	1	1.59%

Following some key findings from the survey which referred to a different attitude of organisations who were more familiar with digitalisation we took a qualitative step in the study focusing only on the UK. Thus, to gain a more in-depth understanding of the actual practices and examples of how hotels currently use emerging technologies and AI in TM 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted from January to February 2024 via MS Teams. The participants were employed in 3- and 4-star hotels. Non-probability purposive sampling was adopted which involved the deliberate selection of the individuals suitable for the research purposes (Polkinghorne, 1988). The selection of participants for the interviews and the survey was based on relative criteria: hotel star rating, position held, hotel department, years of experience and nationality (Jones et al. 2013). The interviews lasted 60-90 minutes. Table 2 provides an overview of the categories of interviewees. A total of 11 managers, 7 from the HR department and 4 from other functions, as well as 9 non-managerial employees, were interviewed. To maintain anonymity, all interviewees were recorded as participants 1, 2, etc.

Table 2. Characteristics of Interview Respondents

Participant Number	Hotel Star Rating	Position Held	Hotel Department	Years of Experience	Nationality
Participant 1	3*	HR Manager	Human Resources	5	Polish
Participant 2	4*	Hotel Manager	Management	8	English
Participant 3	4*	F&B Assistant	Front of House	6	English
Participant 4	3*	Reception Manager	Front of House	7	Latvian
Participant 5	4*	HR Manager	Human Resources	4	English
Participant 6	4*	Pastry Chef	Kitchen	3	Portuguese
Participant 7	3*	HR Manager	Human Resources	12	Latvian
Participant 8	3*	HR Officer	Human Resources	7	English
Participant 9	4*	Night Manager	Nights	8	Italian
Participant 10	4*	Guest services staff	Conference & Banqueting	7	Bulgarian
Participant 11	4*	C&B staff	Conference & Banqueting	5	Romanian
Participant 12	3*	Duty Manager	Management	10	Bulgarian
Participant 13	4*	Guest services Assistant	Conference & Banqueting	7	Polish
Participant 14	3*	Sommelier	Conference & Banqueting	8	English
Participant 15	3*	HR Manager	Human Resources	10	English
Participant 16	4*	Receptionist	Front of House	4	Italian
Participant 17	3*	HR Manager	Human Resources	7	Bulgarian
Participant 18	4*	Bar staff	F&B	5	English
Participant 19	4*	Cluster HR Manager	Human Resources	11	English
Participant 20	4*	Chef de partie	Kitchen	5	Lithuanian

Findings and Discussion of Quantitative Data

Performance and Effort Expectancy

As illustrated in Table 3, the respondents generally agreed on the usefulness of emerging technologies in their jobs (M = 3.96, SD = 0.68). They also perceived emerging technologies as easy to use (M = 3.87, SD = 0.81)). The data aligns with a SHRM feature article by Zielinski (2023), which indicates that organisations recognise the benefits of using emerging technologies.

Table 3. Performance and Effort Expectancy

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Performance Expectancy:		
I find emerging technologies useful in my daily life.	3.83	0.64
Using emerging technologies increases my chances of achieving things that are important to me.	3.94	0.62
Using emerging technologies helps me to accomplish things more quickly.	3.94	0.76
Using emerging technologies increases my productivity.	4.14	0.67
Overall	3.96	0.68
Effort Expectancy:		
Learning how to use emerging technologies is easy for me.	3.98	0.81
My interaction with emerging technologies is clear and understandable.	3.90	0.87
I find emerging technologies easy to use.	3.83	0.79
It is easy for me to become skilful at using emerging technologies.	3.78	0.75
Overall	3.87	0.81

Usage of Emerging Technologies (and AI) in TM

The quantitative data from this study (see Table 4) suggests that these technologies are not yet widely used in the hospitality industry. Despite the increasing popularity of emerging technologies in the business world and their use in TM is a notable trend (Wiblen & Marler, 2021), respondents occasionally used data analytics (M = 4.38, SD = 1.17), cloud technologies (M = 4.29, SD = 1.20), mobile applications (M = 4.27, SD = 1.39) and automation (M = 4.13, SD = 1.22) in TM, while they rarely use the other 6 types of technologies in TM.

Regarding the use of AI in TM, the mean values for talent acquisition (M = 3.84, SD = 1.56), talent development (M = 3.75, SD = 1.49), and talent retention (M = 3.70, SD = 1.47) indicate a tendency towards infrequent to occasional use.

Table 4. Usage of Emerging Technologies (and AI) in Talent Management

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Usage of Emerging Technologies in Talent Management:		
My organisation uses artificial intelligence in talent management.	3.95	1.52
My organisation uses automation in talent management.	4.13	1.22
My organisation uses blockchain in talent management.	3.62	1.51
My organisation uses cloud technologies in talent management.	4.29	1.20
My organisation uses data analytics in talent management.	4.38	1.17
My organisation uses gamification in talent management.	3.75	1.56
My organisation uses machine learning in talent management.	3.81	1.46
My organisation uses mobile applications in talent management.	4.27	1.39
My organisation uses virtual reality (VR) / augmented reality (AR) in talent management.	3.84	1.57
My organisation uses wearable technologies in talent management.	3.95	1.60
Overall	4.00	1.44
Usage of AI in Talent Acquisition:		
My organisation uses AI to review resumes, CVs, and cover letters.	3.90	1.51
My organisation uses AI to produce an automated employee recruitment.	3.62	1.59
My organisation uses AI to customise job specifications and find appropriate candidates.	3.83	1.41
My organisation uses AI to shortlist candidates for interviews.	3.98	1.73
My organisation uses AI to produce job descriptions.	3.86	1.56
My organisation uses AI to generate specific interview questions prior to interviews.	3.83	1.57
Overall	3.84	1.56
Usage of AI in Talent Development:		
My organisation uses AI to identify learning & development needs.	3.56	1.38
My organisation uses AI to develop learning activities and materials.	3.86	1.40
My organisation uses AI to customise personalised development opportunities.	3.65	1.47
My organisation uses AI to analyse learning & development data.	3.83	1.56
My organisation uses AI to evaluate the effectiveness of talent development strategies.	3.87	1.63
Overall	3.75	1.49
Usage of AI in Talent Retention:		
My organisation uses AI to identify factors contributing to employee attrition.	3.76	1.42
My organisation uses AI to generate talent engagement & retention strategies.	3.70	1.43
My organisation uses AI to analyse talent sentiment data.	3.65	1.58
Overall	3.70	1.47

However, the dispersion within the data set is significant, as the standard deviation was above 1 for all items. This discrepancy suggests that certain organisations are at the forefront of driving this trend in the industry, while others hardly ever use them. Therefore, further analysis was done. Table 5 shows that hotels in the UK have consistently higher average scores for all aspects of TM compared to those in Greece and Hong Kong. In Greece, emerging technologies and AI were used less frequently in TM,

but responses were more varied, indicating less uniform implementation. This additional analysis provides only a preliminary insight due to the unevenly distributed sample sizes across the three countries.

Table 5. Comparison of Usage of Emerging Technologies and AI in Talent Management among Three Countries

Usage	UK (n = 45)		Greece (n = 15)		Hong Kong (n = 3)	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Usage of Emerging Technologies in Talent Management	4.41	0.92	3.53	1.98	3.80	1.10
Usage of AI in Talent Acquisition	4.49	1.00	2.00	1.60	2.00	0.84
Usage of AI in Talent Development	4.41	0.91	2.00	1.48	2.33	0.49
Usage of AI in Talent Retention	4.45	0.79	1.80	1.27	2.33	1.08

Digital Savvy Culture Strategies

In addition, the quantitative data shows that hotels are making efforts to create a digitally savvy working environment through various means (see Table 6). In line with the findings that hotels are beginning to use advanced technologies in TM, they are currently relying on external technical experts (M = 4.51, SD = 0.88) and encouraging their staff to use emerging technologies (M = 4.41, SD = 1.17). However, providing devices (M = 4.17, SD = 1.19) and prioritising these as performance goals (M = 4.14, SD = 1.40) may not be effective at this stage to promote a digital culture in the workplace (Dittes et al., 2019).

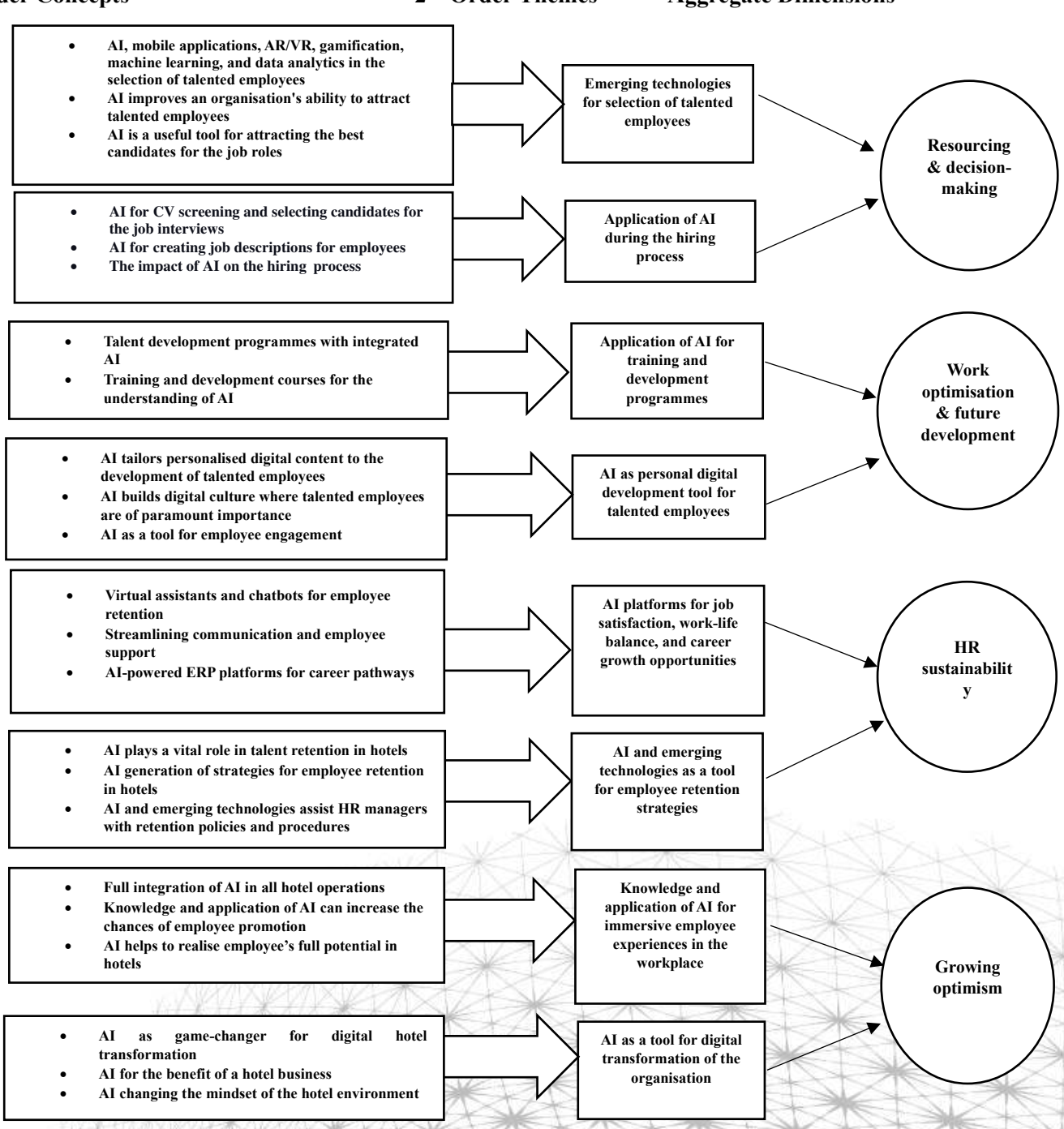
Table 6. Digitally Savvy Culture Strategies

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
My organisation encourages employees to use emerging technologies.	4.41	1.17
My organisation offers opportunities for employees to learn emerging technologies.	4.24	1.16
My organisation provides software/equipment for employees to use emerging technologies.	4.17	1.19
My organisation outsources projects to vendors with good emerging technology skills.	4.51	0.88
My organisation hires IT staff with good emerging technology skills.	4.35	1.32
My organisation includes usage of emerging technologies in performance goals.	4.14	1.40
Leaders in my organisation show commitment to use more emerging technologies in business.	4.29	1.22
Overall	4.30	1.20

Findings and Discussion of Qualitative Data

The qualitative part of the research worked towards triangulating the data that emerged in the previous research method. The qualitative analysis of the interviews followed established techniques and procedures for naturalistic inquiry and grounded theory building (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and consisted of the following series of steps: 1) Interview scripts were entered into NVivo12 to organise the initial responses; 2) Following Gioia et al. (2013) approach to thematic analysis, a series of codes were generated to create first-order categories; 3) Looked for connections between the first-order categories that could lead to second-order themes; and 4) Second-order themes were organised into overarching themes to create aggregate dimensions. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the data, a second member of the research team independently coded the interviews and both analysts checked the consistency of the final aggregated dimensions, as described in Figure 1. Finally, we conducted "member checks" (Nag et al., 2007) with the research participants to ensure that our interpretive analysis made sense to the interviewees.

Figure 1. Data Structure



Resourcing & Decision Making (see Table 7)

Emerging Technologies for Selection and Hiring of Talented Employees

The research found that AI is being used in UK 3- and 4-star hotels to select and recruit talented staff. Although it has been a learning curve for recruiters, they claimed that they use it successfully to improve the quality of candidate selection, assess job skills faster, and strategically match jobs with advertised hotel positions. This finding is in line with Stone et al. (2024) findings who emphasise that the use of AI in talent acquisition helps to fill vacancies faster, improve the quality of applicants and minimise undesirable hires. The results show that 4-star hotels have particularly introduced gamification with real-life scenarios aimed at evaluating the characteristics of hired candidates. The gamification approach can be an effective way of recruitment, especially for the millennial generation, where points or badges are awarded for employee performance (Joy & Assistant, 2017).

Work Optimisation & Future Development (see Table 8)

Application of AI for Training and Development Programmes

The results show that some 4-star hotels use VR simulations to train employees in different departments: reception, C&B, kitchen, and management. The training aimed to provide employees with a more immersive hospitality experience. Ferreira et al. (2021) claimed that the use of VR aims to change the paradigm of virtual human resource development (VHRD). VHRD focuses on the integration of human imagination with technology to create boundless formal and informal learning opportunities. Also, VR gaming programmes are used for preparing special meals, conducting orientation programmes, and career development courses (Khandelwal & Upadhyay, 2021).

AI as Personal Digital Development Tool for Talented Employees

The research found that some 3 and 4-star hotels in the UK are using AI for various C&B purposes to improve customer service and revenue management. AI was found to have a greater impact on digital natives, millennials, and generation Z, who prefer to use AI-based HR tools that send messages and offer chats on their social media with company updates, goals, initiatives, and promotions. Waleed et al. (2023) claim that millennials and generation Z spend most of their time on social media to connect with other people. Therefore, AI-based HR tools that provide updates linked to social media could effectively speed up communication with this group of employees. This finding was in line with UTAUT theory (Venkatesh et al., 2003) that the influence of important others boosts the usage among younger generation of employees in the workplace.

HR Sustainability (see Table 9)

AI Platforms for Job Satisfaction, Work-life Balance, and Career Growth Opportunities

Interview responses revealed that 3- and 4-star hotels in the UK that have reached a high level of maturity in emerging technologies and AI are using Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) to monitor work-life balance and develop career opportunities for hotel employees. Yathiraju (2022) asserted that ERP with integrated AI deploys software and programmes to manage all essential supplies, development, facilities, finance, and other operations of a business. The research found that ERP platforms with AI-powered data talent intelligence aim to create connected learning and growth experiences, enable personalised development, and build employee capabilities. Appelbaum et al. (2017) asserted that ERP platforms that create AI-powered talent experiences help unleash the boundless potential of the workforce and streamline the way this is achieved successfully.

AI and Emerging Technologies as a Tool for Employee Retention Strategies

The research participants from various hotel functions revealed that hotel management reports aided by AI predictive analytics effectively facilitated incentives, rewards, and recognition to employees, which ultimately have led to the reduction of turnover rates. This finding is in line with Schweyer (2018), who argues that predictive analytics for employee retention is one of the most mature and

straightforward solutions in the field of predictive workforce analytics. Furthermore, predictive analytics identifies which employees are at risk of leaving the organisation even before employees consciously intend to leave (Das et al., 2022).

Growing Optimism (see Table 10)

Knowledge and Application of AI for Immersive Employees' Experiences in the Workplace

It has been noted that some 3 and 4-star hotels are training their staff in AI and emerging technologies by providing immersive training. Examples given in the interviews included on-demand AI training, immersive training simulations, and gamification where employees received badges for completed tasks. However, not all hotels were able to offer these applications as they lacked experts who could deliver such training. In these cases, managers demanded additional investment in this technology and resisted the introduction of applications before the right conditions were in place. Davenport and Ronanki (2018) claim that the adoption of AI is still too expensive and too risky, as the technology is new, and managers lack the expertise and understanding of how to use it successfully in their organisation. This is in line with UTAUT theory that highlighted availability of technical infrastructure and facilitating conditions determine the usage of the AI in the hospitality organisations (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

AI as a Tool for Digital Transformation of the Organisation

Finally, the study found that AI is perceived as a decisive factor for the hospitality industry. Digitally mature hotels are using AI and emerging technologies to optimise hotel rates, for training and development purposes, to communicate with internal and external customers, and for employee engagement and retention. This fact is changing the mindset of hotel managers who are embracing the digitalisation of the business and the wider use of AI for the benefit of employees and customers. This realisation is especially true for digitally mature organisations that adopt the ongoing digital transformation systematically and efficiently through management practises, upskilling employees and developing a deeper understanding of the process of adopting digital technologies (Nikopoulou et al., 2023). The perceptions of hotel professionals about the usefulness and easiness of advanced technology and AI is a promising finding that allows some positivity for its enthusiastic support by managers and a fast adoption into TM strategies for recruitment, training and retention of their existing and the rising star performers.

Conclusion

This research was a pilot study, which showed the stage in which hotel companies are currently in the digital transformation of TM. The main research question was to explore the perspectives of those on the frontline of decision-making on where and how advanced technology and AI are currently being used in their hotels and for what purpose. The quantitative study revealed that while the academic literature attempts to give the impression that AI is already being used extensively in the industry (Wynn & Lam, 2023) the use of AI applications varies significantly among different parts of the world. Organisations more mature in digitisation and digitalisation (Nylen & Holmström, 2015) have created a culture of trust in technology in hotel operations that is more accepting of the use and inclusion of AI applications for HR purposes, including TM. The UK appears more mature than establishments in Greece and Hong Kong. The qualitative study looked more carefully into the UK market and found that hotel companies have used multiple methods of advanced technology to facilitate recruitment and selection processes, training and development, and talent retention. However, TM seems to benefit primarily from the digitisation of information, a step that has long been achieved through automated and detailed analysis of hard data (Sandberg et al., 2020), which makes decisions easier and faster. Participants indicated that they are familiar with AI due to the widespread technological automated techniques used to respond to customers' needs and improve their experience. The study has therefore shown that TM's digital transformation is taking place in an orderly fashion from the outside in. First, the benefits for guests are agreed upon and defined, and then it is transferred internally to HR to improve the management of their talented employees.

Implications

Practical implications

The practical implications of this research are manifold. First, the study helps HR managers gain a better understanding of the application of AI and emerging technologies to develop TM strategies and practices in the age of digital transformation. Second, the findings suggest that hotel managers from companies that are more mature in digitalisation and digitisation are the frontrunners in using AI applications that help create an operational culture focused on more fully integrating technology into the decision-making process, hence facilitating its use in the delivery of key tasks. Third, talented employees can benefit from the application of AI in ERPs to develop career opportunities, as well as chatbots, AR/VR, and gamification for immersive hotel experiences. Finally, the findings suggest that hotel managers who have successfully integrated AI into hotel operations and have more confidence in AI and emerging technologies can outperform their competitors and gain a competitive advantage as employees are prompt to accept technology and may develop behaviours that foster the use of advanced technologies in their initiative.

Theoretical implications

The theoretical implications of this research are positioned at the intersection between TAM and UTAUT theories. First, quantitative and qualitative data support the high-performance expectancy of AI and emerging technologies. Second, the quantitative data finds that effort expectancy is high meaning that AI and emerging technologies are easy to use. Third, the quantitative data establish that hospitality organisations occasionally use data analytics, cloud technologies, mobile applications, and automation in TM, while they rarely use the other 6 types of technologies in TM. Fourth, the quantitative data reveal that the use of AI in talent acquisition, talent development, and talent retention tends to be infrequent to occasional. Fifth, qualitative data establish that the social influence of peers increases the usage of new technologies in the UK 3- and 4-star hotels. Finally, qualitative data supports that facilitating conditions are pivotal in using emerging technologies.

Research Limitations and Future Research Avenues

The main limitation of this pilot study is the sample size, which collected 63 responses from the research participants from the UK, Greece, and Hong Kong. Furthermore, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted to get the triangulation of the data. It is acknowledged further research needs to increase the number of research participants. The study lays the foundation for a more comprehensive exploration of this continuum to examine its cultural adaptations in different parts of the five continents where there are recognisable distinctive national cultural traits. Also, a better understanding of the reasons why organisations are willing to integrate digital transformation techniques into TM would help to draw a cognitive map of their decision-making process that contributes to the successful application of TM digital transformation strategies in the hospitality industry.

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Appendix

Table 7. Dimensions, Themes, Categories, and Data

Second-Order Themes and First-Order Categories	Representative Data
Overarching dimension: Attraction practices	
A. Emerging technologies in the selection of talented employees	*A1: "In our hotels, we started to use AI to select talented employees. That was a learning curve, of course, but it paid off successfully. I as HR manager can name a few benefits of it. From my perspective, AI enables hotels to identify more qualified candidates and if we require source additional candidates as well. Also, it minimises the time for search of the top talents, as matching candidates with specific roles can be a very difficult task… That takes lots of time. AI can do this task effectively and fast to select the best candidate for the job role."* *A2: "AI is the way forward to a successful hire, as AI can improve the quality of selected candidates. I clearly understand that it gets all the details right to find the best candidate for a specific job role. It searches through a large amount of data and identifies that one in the talent pool that matches the job skills, that will contribute the most to the success of the company. That is an invaluable task!"* *A3: "I am glad that asked that question, recently, we started to apply AI-powered video games that can assess the traits of the candidates we are going to hire. By playing this game we give them various real-life scenarios that happened in our hotel, where they act, and AI can generate further content on that. That is how we can assess our future hires and potentially can see how the candidate will fit into our organisation."*
B. Application of AI during hiring process	*B1: "AI plays an important role nowadays in the selection of the best candidate. The time of manually going through the CVs has gone and I am glad of it! What I noticed, AI can put certain criteria to screen all CVs and choose the best match for the job. AI matches relevant skills, industry experience, previous roles, and companies worked and provides the best candidate for hire, in some way short-listing them. I strongly believe that the application of AI allows the automation of tedious jobs. Later, it provides suggestions for the interviews for short-listed candidates."* *B2: "I believe that AI is the best tool for CV screening as it removes human biases towards candidates and assesses them on their skills and experience. For me, as an HR manager, it adds value as I can get effective talent attraction to the specified role. I also think that AI gives better employee experience as it can provide feedback to candidates and areas for improvement if this job application was not successful."* *B3: "Recently, we applied AI to hire a Head Receptionist in our hotel. That was a useful experience. Our staff are required to have numerous skills and experience to have to work productively at reception. AI sets multiple real-life scenarios for*

	our potential hires and that provided the best candidates for job interviews."

Table 8. Dimensions, Themes, Categories, and Data

Second-Order Themes and First-Order Categories	Representative Data
Overarching dimension: Development strategies	
A. Application of AI for training and development programmes	*A1: "AI gains its momentum. Our hotel applies VR simulations to train our employees in different departments: reception, C&B, and management. I think it is the way forward as VR provides an immersive experience to all our hotel staff. I also think it teaches how to apply different scenarios, where employee's performance is monitored and regular feedback for improvement provided where knowledge gaps are identified."* *A2: "As a Chef, I can say that sometimes I use AI in recipe creation, optimisation of menu creation, and adding various options including sustainability as well. After that with the help of AI it is added to social media, where customers can rate it and get their feedback. By doing this I can create the most successful menu, that is trendy and has sustainable options that attract lots of clients to our hotel."*
B. AI as personal digital development tool for talented employees	B1: *"As a company, we focused on training our staff. Without AI learning and training nowadays, the business cannot be competitive and offer the best employee value proposition to our staff. In our hotel AI can tailor learning needs to a specific employee and specific tasks they need to complete and make it individualised and meaningful for them. Recently, we launched it to measure the success of our talented employees, for example, in the C&B we created engaging and motivational stimulations that adjust the content based on task completion and provide a report. That helps in customer service and revenue management and demands forecasting."* B2*: "I believe that AI we utilise in our hotel helps to create a more inclusive workforce. What I mean by that AI creates tailored training to each specific individual…Also, AI creates automated content, personalised learning paths, and reports. For our multicultural teams AI translation is available to speak the same language as the learner. That bridges the gap and brings employees a better understanding of the topic."* *B3: "In our hotel, we have lots of generations, such as Z and Millennial cohort of employees for whom emails or regular meetings don't get much value. They are on social media most of the time. What we have done in our hotel, is implement an AI-based HR tool that sends messages and provides chats on their social media with the company updates, goals, initiatives, and promotions. In these ways, all our employees and managers are more connected and better engaged in real charts and burning priority conversations."*

Table 9. Dimensions, Themes, Categories, and Data

Second-Order Themes and First-Order Categories	Representative Data
Overarching dimension: Retention strategies	
A. AI platforms for job satisfaction, work-life balance, and career growth opportunities	*A1: "Our company uses an ERP platform to develop career opportunities for our employees. This system allows us to go beyond the data and understand what people need from a career in hospitality. It provides performance metrics and identifies skills gaps. For example, if someone is underperforming the Cornerstone will help to identify why and how they can succeed. It is harnessing the power of AI that successfully aligned with the company and individual career goals of our employees to create meaningful work experiences."* *A2: "Unfortunately, I am not aware of any AI platforms that our hotel uses for job satisfaction, work-life balance, and career growth. What I know we have old-school appraisal meetings with the line manager, where we discuss all our career milestones and what needs to be achieved in terms of our career progression. If we have all milestones achieved, we have job satisfaction and can achieve work-life balance within the company."* *A3: "In my experience, our hotel successfully uses chatbots and virtual assistants to enhance employee retention. They became a real game-changer, in which our hotel virtual assistants collect employees' feedback, and provide personalised recommendations on the next steps in career development. Finally, they send all information to HR, who can build individual career development courses necessary for our job roles."*
B. AI and emerging technologies as a tool for employee retention strategies	*B1: "In my hotel, I use AI for multiple purposes. First, I use AI for predictive analytics to analyse employee turnover. It operates with multiple data on employee satisfaction, wage structure, motivation, engagement, and work-life balance. It provides a report for the management teams, where we can see clearly what needs to be improved… Currently, we identified that most of our employees are leaving due to poor training and development provided and lack of benefit structure in our hotel. As a management team have considered that and introduced multi-level career development courses and benefit structure for all hotel departments."* *B2: "AI is used for sentiment analysis in our hotel. I will explain what it means, AI analyses our employees' surveys which we complete every two months, and provides links to social media Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn, where we post our comments. Sentiment analysis can get the patterns where we show agreement, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and our feelings and emotions. Based on that it provides reports for the*

	management of the hotel where improvements are needed. That can boost retention of staff if proper actions are taken".
	B3: "In the HR department, we utilise AI for monitoring employee performance and career growth. By analysing satisfaction surveys AI can provide a bigger picture, of who from employees are planning to leave the company or identify personalised career planning. Also, from my personal experience, AI helps to analyse employee engagement, and motivation and sets reminders for the managers when employees are ready for a new challenge in their career."

Table 10. Dimensions, Themes, Categories, and Data

Second-Order Themes and First-Order Categories	Representative Data
Overarching dimension: Future perspectives on AI and emerging technologies	
A. Knowledge and application of AI for immersive employees' experiences in the workplace	*A1: "I work as a Pastry Chef and as such we do not use AI in our hotel. I am aware of it that it can be used successfully for creating new recipes and adding new flavours to the dishes. That is something that we need to develop in our hotel… that would be great!"* A2*: "In our hotel, we had AI training recently and I took part in it. I think that knowledge of AI can help me to get a career promotion. As a night manager, I am active at night and most activities can be done during that time. Our management dedicated 1 hour per week to AI training, so I can do it while on duty. The training was very interesting, as it provided virtual training scenarios, where I had to provide solutions to hospitality situations. That was an engaging and immersive experience for me. I enjoyed it!"* A3: *"I believe that our hotel is a champion in AI technology and training. We have a lot of AI training on demand, and immersive training simulation, especially with busy hospitality rotas to fit around. Moreover, AI provides instant feedback to the employees' surveys, we use gamification where employees can get badges for task completion. I think it modern tech-savvy approach, where training costs can be cut, as it is provided online at any time employees are not busy during the service."*
B. AI as a tool for digital transformation of the organisation	*B1: "We are facing another technological revolution nowadays. AI is developing rapidly and impacting hospitality. In our hotel, we have an AI concierge that provides information to our guests about all services, provides personalised assistance, and can easily translate information to any language for our guests from different countries. Also, we have AI for price optimisation through AI algorithms, analysing revenue, room pricing, and development of target segments. Ultimately, AI ensures that our guests have seamless experiences".* *B2: "I think that AI plays a vital role in transferring our hotel. We have chatbots and virtual agents that enhance our customer experience and provide a personal touch. At the bar we started*

to use AI for creating cocktails for different occasions, we input data on sales for example of the most popular cocktails and AI provides solutions to what other festive cocktails will be popular this year by using predictive analytics. Could you even think about it before?"

B3: "In my role as a cluster HR Manager, I implement the application of AI in our hotels. I should say that it is a learning curve for us, and it takes some time to understand the technology. Recently, we started to use multiple faces of AI chatbots that deal with guests' inquiries, smart room controls, and AI predictive analytics that analyses guests' preferences and provides individualised approach. Interestingly, we started to use mobile apps for, AI license plate registration that matches data on vehicles with guests staying in the hotel. Finally, we use digital wallets like Apple Pay, and Google Pay to speed up the transactions at reception or online".