



# High-Performance Work Systems in Tourism and Hospitality: A systematic literature review and future research agenda

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## Abstract

### *Purpose*

The understanding of HPWS is still in the neonatal stage in hospitality and tourism literature. The authors of the current paper conduct a systematic literature review, consolidate the available literature and propose a scope for future research in this vital area of research in hospitality and tourism.

## Research Methodology

This study is based on a systematic literature review of HPWS research papers in the hospitality and tourism sector. The study used the PRISMA technique to screen articles published in SCOPUS-listed journals between 2014 and 2021.

## Findings

When compared to previous research in the organizational behavior and human resource management literature, this study identifies a significant gap in the development of HPWS research in the H&T. It proposes several research gaps which may be addressed by future researchers.

## Implications

Considering the hospitality and tourism context, the current paper provides valuable inputs which will help to improve the current state of HPWS literature in hospitality and tourism. Additionally, it will help the practitioners appreciate the importance of HPWS in the context.

## Originality

To the best of researchers' understanding, there has been no literature review on HPWS in hospitality and tourism published in peer-reviewed journals in the last 5 years. This study is an original work that presents future researchers' potential areas of research in this area.

**Keywords:** *High-Performance Work Systems, Tourism, Hospitality, Human Resource Management.*

## Introduction

The hospitality and tourism industry (H&T) is among the fastest developing industries globally (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021). It contributed 10.4 percent of global GDP in 2019, but that figure fell by 3.7 percent in 2020 as a result of pandemics (WTTC, 2021). The industry is recovering from this downfall and severe loss of business. The industry is trying to identify the policies, procedures, and innovative practises that will have a multiplier effect and help to expedite this process of recovery, which is possible if the practitioners are able to identify ways to improve the employee, team, and organisational level outcomes. HPWS has caught the attention of researchers and practitioners for decades as it is found to “multiplier effect” (Becker & Gerhart, 1996) on employees’ outcomes and firms’ performance in general (Huselid, 1995) and in the hospitality and tourism industry (Sun et al., 2007). Evans & Davis (2015) defined HPWS as "an integrated system of HR practises that is internally consistent (alignment among HR practices) and externally consistent (alignment with organisational strategy)". Due to the importance of

HPWS in the hospitality and tourism industry (Murphy et al., 2018), scholars highlight the need for further investigation into the topic (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020), especially in hotel settings (Wong, Xu, Chan, & He, 2019). There is a need for literature reviews on HPWS in different (Kaushik & Mukherjee, 2021), particularly in the H&T setting (Aladag, Köseoglu, King, & Mehraliyev, 2020). The current paper consolidates and analyses the available HPWS literature in H&T. It identifies several gaps in the current literature and proposes avenues for future studies in this vital area of research.

### **Definition and meaning of HPWS**

HPWS is considered as a combination of a group of separate but, interconnected HR practices to form a bundle, designed to enhance employee's skill and effort. It helps in drawing out skills of employees to perform their task and enable agility in up-skilling and re-skilling (Úbeda-García, Claver-Cortés, Marco-Lajara, Zaragoza-Sáez, & García-Lillo, 2018). Huselid (1995) defined HPWS as "a series of HRM processes designed to develop staff skills, motivation and engagement so that the company can achieve a competitive advantage.

In general, HPWS practises include HR tools and tactics such as selective recruiting, performance-based pay, empowerment, and employee transparency (Yalabik, Chen, Lawler, & Kim, 2008). Employee involvement, commitment, and productivity are all improved as a result of HPWS practises, which motivates employees to work harder and better (Farrukh, Khan, Raza, & Shahzad, 2020). Chen et al.(2018) found that HPWS affects the turnover intention of employees negatively by providing them flexibility and autonomy.

Research indicates that HR practices, when bundled and implemented in harmony with each other, have an impact on employees (Bello-Pintado, 2015). This arrangement of HR practises supports the development of employees and the organisation. These human resource practises among employees increase the productivity of the organisation (Boxall & Macky, 2009). A plethora of HR practises have been identified by various researchers in different studies (check table 1). However, HR practices, like specialised recruitment, comprehensive staff development, innovation and participatory decision-making, work design, internal mobility; clear job descriptions, are the most common ones found across the HPWS

literature (Boxall & Macky, 2009; Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Huselid, 1995; Kaushik & Mukherjee, 2021).

Table 1: List of Components/dimensions used in previous research studies (Adapted from Kaushik & Mukherjee, 2021)

Components/Dimensions	Author
Selective hiring	(Varma, 1999; Pfeffer, 1998; Hartog, 2004; Huselid, 1995; Zacharatos, 2005; Shih, 2006; Sun, 2007; Takeuchi, 2007; Liao, 2009)
Compensation level and incentive	(Varma, 1999; Pfeffer, 1998; Hartog, 2004; Huselid, 1995; Zacharatos, 2005; Shih, 2006; Sun, 2007; Takeuchi, 2007; Liao, 2009)
Performance appraisal	(Varma, 1999; Pfeffer, 1998; Hartog, 2004; Huselid, 1995; Shih, 2006; Sun, 2007; Takeuchi, 2007; Liao, 2009)
Effective Training	(Kling, 1995; Pfeffer, 1998; Huselid, 1995; Zacharatos, 2005; Shih, 2006; Sun, 2007; Takeuchi, 2007; Liao, 2009)
Work design	(Hartog, 2004; Huselid, 1995; Zacharatos, 2005; Sun, 2007; Takeuchi, 2007; Liao, 2009)
Policies & practices	(Huselid & Becker, 1995)
Information sharing/Communication	(Pfeffer, 1998; Huselid, 1995; Zacharatos, 2005; Shih, 2006; Sun, 2007; Takeuchi, 2007)
Employment security	(Pfeffer, 1998; Zacharatos, 2005; Shih, 2006; Sun, 2007)
Self-managed and effective teams	(Kling, 1995; Zacharatos, 2005; Liao, 2009)
Participation in decision making	(Kling, 1995; Hartog, 2004; Huselid, 1995; Zacharatos, 2005; Shih, 2006; Sun, 2007)
Profit sharing	(Kling, 1995)
Decentralized Decision making	(Pfeffer, 1998)
Diversity and inclusion	(Pfeffer, 1998)

## HPWS in H&T

H&T is known for customised services where the production and consumption of the services happen almost at the same point in time. Consequently, the HPWS practices effective in manufacturing may not be effective in services. Since long, hospitality business is facing issues like low wages, unfavourable working conditions, and a low adoption of formal and informal human resources practises and policies (such as family leave, paid maternity leave, equal employment opportunity, health and safety policy, grievance procedures, and communication mechanisms), and it depends on a temporary and low-cost labour force (Knox & Walsh, 2005). It has been found that the hospitality sector, does not plan for sustainable labour practises and staff retention because the primary tactic used to address the shifting labour demand has been casualization (Davidson & Wang, 2011). The hotel sector has a high amount of turnover at both the managerial and operational levels, which reduces efficiency, lowers profitability, and raises training and replacement costs (Davidson and Wang 2011). The competitive advantage for hospitality

businesses as well as their capacity to provide high-quality food and services, will depend on the human resource side of things given the growing global rivalry and rising consumer expectations.

## Research Methodology

The authors identified the HPWS studies in the H&T context from the international peer-review journals listed in SCOPUS published between 2014 and 2021. SCOPUS is a database that includes publications that have a rigorous selection criterion (peer-reviewed academic research) (Elsevier, 2019). Article selection from the SCOPUS database helped to assure the quality of the selected articles. A combination of keywords like "high-performance work systems", "HRM practices", "HPWS practices", "high performing systems" in association with "hospitality and tourism", "hospitality", "tourism" and "service" were used for the information search related to the topic. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are listed in table 2. The Preferred Reporting Items for System Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) technique was administered to this review to increase its validity and reliability (PRISMA, 2019) (refer to fig 1). 69 research papers were identified in the first level of selection. The authors, on inspecting the source and the type of paper, removed 12 papers as they were part of conference proceedings or chapters in books. At the next level of screening, they were finally included in the literature review after the authors read the full papers, and they found that the samples included in these papers were from different industries and sectors. All the 12 eligible articles were then arranged in a table and labelled to appreciate the objectives of the current paper (refer to table 3).

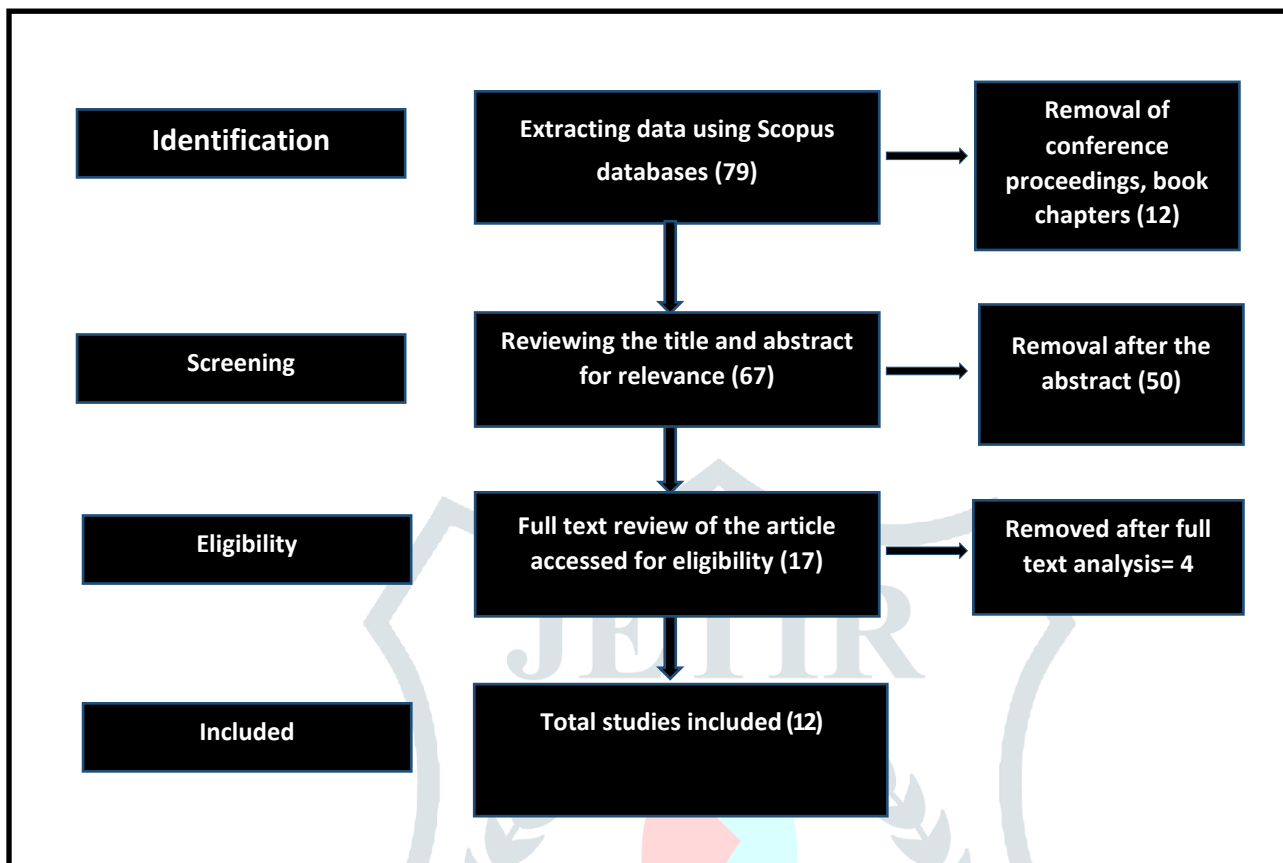


Figure 1: Preferred Reporting Items for System Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) followed for the current study. Source: Moher et al. (2009)

Table 2: Research papers considered for literature review

Author & Year	Type of paper	Sample size, description & Country	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Results
(Farrukh, Ansari, Raza, Meng, & Wang, 2021)	Empirical	375 frontline service employees	performance work practices (selective staffing, while training and rewards) and psychological capital (H.E.R.O)	employee innovative work behavior (EIB)	The association between HPWPs-EIB is mediated by psychological capital (PsyCap).
(Dorta-Afonso, González-de-la-Rosa, García-Rodríguez, & Romero-Domínguez, 2021)	Empirical	494 hotel workers	HPWS (employment security, "training", "internal mobility", "results-oriented appraisal", "work-life balance" "clear job description"	employees' motivation, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and QoL	HPWS directly influence employees' motivation, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and QoL. Additionally, workers' motivation and organizational commitment positively influence job satisfaction, which, in turn, enhances workers' quality of life.
(Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2020)	Literature review	2004- 2019 (N = 28)	NA	NA	identifies a significant gap in the progress of the HPWS research in the tourism and hospitality sector, contrary to the so-far research in the generic human resource management (HRM) literature.
(Gürlek, 2020)	Empirical	Senior managers in five star hotels	HPWS (Selected Staff, Complete Training, Advanced Performance Testing, Equal Reward Program)	organizational ambidexterity and knowledge absorptive capacity	intellectual capital acts as a full mediator of the effects of HPWSs on organizational ambidexterity and knowledge absorptive capacity.

(Liu & Lin, 2019)	Empirical	Data collected from multiple sources at a multinational food-service chain, including 162 restaurant managers, 472 management team members and 474 frontline employees	HPWS (s comprehensive staffing, extensive equitable developmental performance appraisal)	training Loyalty, service delivery, rewards, participation	HPWS and MTF were positively related to SOCBs via distinct kinds of employees' flexibility.
(Jaiswal & Tyagi, 2020)	Empirical	384 employees working in 32 hotels, Uttarakhand state, India	HPWS and Work Engagement	Employee Service Innovatove behavior	WE mediated the relationship between HPWPs and SIB. Furthermore, it was observed that Job autonomy acted as amoderator betweenWE and SIB.
(Murphy et al., 2018)	Literature review	89 scholarly articles on HPWS in Hospitality (1991-2015)	NA	NA	Proposed the following 13 HPWS for H&T: 1. Selectivity In Recruiting 2. High Wages 3. Incentive Pay Based on Performance Appraisal 4. Employee Ownership: Other forms of financial incentives 5. Information Sharing 6. Participation And Empowerment 7. Self-Managed Teams 8. Training And Skill Development 9. Training And Skill Development 10. Measurement of the HR Practices 11. Quality of Work/Life 12. Diversity 13. Employer of Choice
(Homayoun Pasha Safavi, 2018)	Empirical	313 customer-contact employees (CCEs) in the hotels of Iran.	high-performance work practices (selective staffing, job security, training, empowerment, rewards, teamwork, career opportunities and work-life balance)	creative performance and extra-role performance.	Career Adaptability is a mediator between HPWPs and creative performance and extra-role performance.





(Bilal Afsar, Asad Shahjehan, 2018)	Empirical	343 top employees working in four-star hotels in Thailand.	HPWS	turnover intention and voluntary turnover	job embeddedness fully mediates the effects of high-performance work practices and trust in supervisor on turnover intentions and turnover intention positively affects the actual voluntary turnover
(Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016)	Empirical	287 frontline employee-supervisor dyads in the international chain hotels in Nigeria	HPWS (selective staffing, job security, teamwork and career opportunities )	absence intentions, service recovery and creative performances	the simultaneous implementation of selective staffing, job security, teamwork and career opportunities fosters work engagement that in turn leads to reduced absence intentions and results in service recovery and creative performances at elevated levels
(Lin & Liu, 2016)	Empirical	203 store owners/store managers and 568 management team members for 203 food-service chain stores	HPWS (enhancing HPWS, motivation-enhancing HPWS, flexibility climate of the management team, service climate, and organizational service performance)	organizational performance.	service climate constitutes the mediating role for the relationship between skill- and motivation-enhancing HPWS and organizational service performance. Moreover, flexibility climate has the moderating effect on the relationship between the HPWS and service climate
(Ružić, 2015)	Empirical	424 hotel employees	HRM Practices	financial performance	.employee engagement, skills, attitudes and behaviour, loyalty and hotel company financial performance are found to significantly influence financial performance.



## Discussion

The authors of the current papers have listed the selected papers in table 3. It includes the antecedents, consequences, sample description, and the findings of the papers. Interestingly, all the papers considered HPWS as an independent variable. There is a need to understand the factors that helped in the development and implementation of HPWS in H&T. Studies in other contexts have identified several factors which positively or negatively influence HPWS.

Most of the studies (7 out of 12) have discussed the influence of HPWS on individual or employee level outcomes. 4 out of these 7 papers discussed employee innovation or creativity as an individual level variable (e.g., Farrukh et al., 2021; Jaiswal & Tyagi, 2019; Safavi et al., 2018, Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016). Farrukh et al., (2021) found the influence of HPWS on employee innovative work behaviour among frontline employees. The authors considered the mediating influence of psychological capital to study the relationship. However, future authors may consider other individual level variables and attitudes such as stress, burnout, locus of control, types of personality, job satisfaction, etc. to study this relationship. Jaiswal & Tyagi (2019) studied the influence of HPWS on employee service and innovative behaviour. Work engagement was considered as a mediator in this relationship. The authors have not clarified the type of employee that they have considered for this study. Service innovative behaviour is important for frontline employees. Furthermore, the authors considered only three HRM practises (training, empowerment, and reward). The first two of the three mentioned practises are not extensively practised in H&T. Both training and empowerment are minimal. Future studies may replicate the study using frontline employees. The influence of HPWS on creative performance behaviour among employees was studied by Safavi et al. (2018) and Karatepe & Olugbade (2016). Both these studies considered the frontline or employee contact employees as samples. Most of these papers measured creative or innovative behaviours through self-reporting. This may be biased. Future researchers may consider the supervisor's rating of an employee's creative or innovative behaviour.

Future researchers may consider the HRM practises proposed by Murphy et al. (2018). These studies included 13 practises that were specifically meant for H&T. It includes: 1. Selectivity Recruiting 2. High Wages 3. Incentive Pay Based on Performance Appraisal 4. Employee Ownership: Other forms of financial

incentives 5. Information Sharing 6. Participation and Empowerment 7. Self-Managed Teams 8. Training and Skill Development 9. Training and Skill Development 10. Measurement of HR Practices 11. Quality of Work/Life 12. Diversity 13. Employer of Choice. Future researchers should empirically test the effectiveness of these practises in the H&T. Considering pandemic and its influence on the H&T workforce, future researchers should also try to identify the emergence of fresh HR practices that may address the new set of challenges. This will further strengthen the HPWS literature in the context.

Dorta et al. (2021) studies the influence of HPWS on quality of life, motivation, and job satisfaction. There is a need to more studies in the area of quality of work life. Kaushik & Mukherjee (2021) in their literature review paper stated the need for more papers to understand the influence of HPWS on employee wellbeing, quality of life, and work life balance. Future researchers should also identify the negative influence of HPWS in the H&T. Afsar et al. (2018) identified the relationship between HPWS and turnover intentions mediated by job embeddedness. Turnover intention may not lead to actual turnover. There is a need to study the influence of HPWS on actual turnover among employees.

Only three papers studied the impact of HPWS on organisational level variables (e.g., Ružić, 2015; Yi-Ting & Nien-Chi, 2016; Gürlek, 2020). Ružić (2015) found HPWS influenced financial performance significantly. This is the only paper that identified the impact of HPWS on an organization's bottom line. However, future studies should identify how HPWS practises influence individual attitudes and behaviors, which subsequently impact departmental level outcomes and, in turn influences organization level performance. Lin & Liu (2016) studied the mediating role of service climate in the relationship between skill- and motivation-enhancing HPWS and organizational service performance. This indicates the importance of HPWS in a customer centric sector like H&T. Earlier studies in the service sector have also indicated similar results. However, this result is important considering the Lin & Liu specified the importance of skill- and motivation-enhancing HPWS.

### **Scope for future research**

There are many studies conducted in manufacturing sector (Zacharatos, Barling, & Iverson, 2005, Huselid, 1995) and in service sector (Heffernan & Dundon, 2016) but there is a need for more studies in H&T.

Future researchers should direct their focus towards addressing the pain points in H&T. The major challenges faced by H&T include attrition rate (Lytle, 2020), and high stress (Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021) among others. All these challenges have been found to be desirably influenced by HPWS in studies conducted in other contexts. Considering these advantages of HPWS, it is observed in the light of research that HPWS has great potential to provide competitive advantage to businesses in H&T.

Earlier studies found a lack of motivation, skills, and creativity among H&T employees. HPWS is found to positively influence knowledge, skills, staff motivation, efficiency, creativity, innovation, and corporate citizenship behaviour of employees (Fabi, Lacoursière, & Raymond, 2015; Wood & de Menezes, 2011). This underlines the potential of HPWS in the H&T context. Studies to identify the influence of HPWS on the above-mentioned variables will prove handy for practitioners who continuously look for ways to improve the same among employees.

In the customer-centric role (the case of frontline employees in H&T) where the perception of customers is very important in having repeat customers and developing a newer customer base (Ehnert, Parsa, Roper, Wagner, & Muller-Camen, 2015), HPWS plays an important role in achieving the goal (Huang, Ahlstrom, Lee, Chen, & Hsieh, 2016). Further, research reveals that HPWS helps in increasing the efficiency of the general process of the organisation (Zhang, Akhtar, Bal, Zhang, & Talat, 2018). This creates the need to study the influence of HPWS on customer related outcomes such as customer satisfaction, customer rating, new customer acquisition rate, etc.

There is a need to understand the HR practices that will be suitable in H&T. Future research may conceptualise and empirically test these practices. With studies around pandemic taking the centre stage, it is important to explain the interaction of HR practices and post pandemic employee challenges. There is substantial evidence in the literature, which has identified the impact of HPWS on the positive relationship between firm financial performance and HRM practises (Delery & Doty, 1996). Research conducted in Russia in different industries has identified a significant linkage between HR practises and the overall organisation's performance (Fey, Morgulis-Yakushev, Park, & Björkman, 2009). Researchers may expect the same or similar results if such studies are conducted in H&T. However, considering seasonal business and the importance of location in business, the moderating influence of these variables in the above-

mentioned may produce interesting results. There is also a need open the HPWS “black box” in HPWS. The “black box” phenomenon signifies the process on how HPWS influence organization performance.

## Implications and Conclusion

The current paper makes a vital contribution to the development of HPWS literature in H&T. The review paper consolidates the current available literature in peer reviewed SCOPUS listed journals. The authors of the current paper have examined the papers and critically discussed the role of HPWS in the different individual and organisational level outcomes. This also underlined the lack of study on the influence of HPWS on team level performance. The review suggests that the studies have mainly focused on the positive outcomes of HPWS. There is a need to conduct studies on the negative influence of HPWS.

HPWS is found to positively influence human capital. The implementation of HPWS in H&T will provide a competitive advantage to such organizations. It is also found to influence organisation level outcomes. Considering the growing acceptance and popularity of HPWs among other sectors, it is important for researchers in H&T to improve the quantum of studies in this area. The current paper is a big boost in this direction as it provides a fresh direction of research for future researchers.

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