

## WHY HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SHOULD GO GREEN IN HOTELS: INTERNAL BENEFIT PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

*Recently, green human resource management (GRHM) has been concerned by organizations and scholars. However, internal benefits to apply GHRM practices in organizations are limitations of previous studies, especially in the hotel industry. Thus, the purpose of this study is to fill this research gap by investigating internal benefits to apply these green practices in hotels. The qualitative method with case study strategy of two hotels (named cases as P and M) is used to conduct this research. On the basics of case studies, this study indicates the following findings. Firstly, the results indicate the enhancement of employees' human capital (e.g. green awareness, knowledge, skill) highlighted in both hotels. Secondly, hotels boost employee's green motivation (e.g. green commitment and behavior) if they apply effectively GHRM practices. Thirdly, the environmental and financial performances are also the important motives in applying GHRM practices in two hotels. Finally, the different green strategy and top management can be utilized to explain the difference about employee's green voluntary behavior between two hotels.*

**KEYWORDS:** *AMO theory, Environmental Management (EM), Green hotel, Green human resource management (GHRM), Internal benefit.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, pressures from the environmental regulations and laws have enhanced organization's awareness in environmental issues (Chan and Hawkins, 2012). Therefore, the environmental concern has become an emerging topic of management scholars recently (Renwick et al., 2013; Masri & Jaaron, 2017). In the hotel industry, more and more hotels have paid attention to the environmental problems because their businesses cause strongly the negative impacts on the environment (Molina-Azorín et al., 2009), and they get benefits such as cost, efficiency, customer satisfaction, legislation, and image (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2017). In order to proactively address environmental problems, the role of human resource management (HRM) is seen as an essential tool for the successful implementation of the environmental management (EM) practices (Ren et al., 2017). Thus, the “environmental” or “green” HRM (GHRM) has become a new research trend in human resource management aspect and it is increasingly viewed as necessity in developing successfully organization's green strategies (Ren et al., 2017).

In the recent, GHRM-related studies have been concerned by scholars (e.g. Renwick et al., 2013, 2016; Pinzone et al., 2016). However, published studies contain the following research gaps. Firstly, following AMO theory (Appelbaum et al., 2000), although there are some empirical studies clarifying entirely roles of GHRM practices in internal benefits such as the environmental

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performance (Tung et al., 2014; Masri & Jaaron, 2017), very few studies investigate the benefits of GHRM application to green human capital (e.g., the environmental awareness, knowledge, skill) or green motivation (e.g., green commitment, behavior). Secondly, although Rehman et al. (2016) state that scholars have been focusing on studying comprehensive green business strategies in the period from 2010 to 2020, almost environment-related studies in hotel context only emphasize and clarify EM practices (e.g. Molina-Azorín et al. 2009; Chan and Hawkins, 2012; Hsiao et al. 2014; Molina-Azorín et al., 2015) without concerning entirely roles of GHRM practices in internal benefits in hotels. Finally, previous studies primarily utilize the quantitative research approach to explain the roles of GHRM practices in organizations (e.g. Pinzone et al., 2016) and employ the qualitative research to review the literature of GHRM practices (e.g. Jabbour & Jabbour, 2016; Renwick et al., 2016). However, these studies have not given entirely understandings to answer why organizations employ GHRM practices. According to Saunders et al. (2009), the qualitative research approach should be employed to understand better contemporary and complex phenomenon or the nature of the problem in GHRM practices in hotels.

This paper, consequently, aims to investigate GHRM practices to answer why hotels apply these green practices, especially the internal benefits. Our findings contribute to the literature and existing studies (1) in clarifying roles of GHRM practices to organization's internal benefits, (2) in giving a new empirical research in exploring GHRM practices utilized in a new research area, the hotel industry, that prior scholars just have concentrated on EM.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Green human resource management practices**

According to Renwick et al. (2013), GHRM practices include three cores of components aiming to develop green abilities (e.g., training, recruitment), motivate green employees (e.g., reward, performance management), and create green opportunities (e.g., employee involvement, organizational culture).

#### **Developing green abilities**

To develop employee's green abilities, green training should be primarily emphasized and is an important organizational or human factor to align HRM practices with organization's environmental goals (Jackson & Seo, 2010) for developing human resources and facilitating a sustainable society (Teixeira et al., 2012). To develop effectively the green training program, organizations need to concentrate on releasing an adequate amount of environmental training programs to employees (Daily et al., 2012; Jabbour, 2013), following employees needed environmental skills and job description sheet (Renwick et al., 2013). Additionally, the role of communication in environmental education/training (Renwick et al., 2013) and the evaluation to the effectiveness of training program through monitoring employee's environmental activities (Jabbour, 2015) should be concerned.

Another important practice is green recruitment viewed as activities of internal or external recruiting which favor individuals committing to the environment (Jabbour et al., 2010). In order to attract environmentally-conscious people for job vacancies, some companies clearly introduce their environmental performance (Renwick et al., 2013) or report of the voluntary environmental standards (Ones & Dilchert, 2013) to candidates. Companies also highlight the preference in the recruitment message to attract environment-oriented candidates (Renwick et al., 2013; Guerci et al., 2016b).

#### **Motivating green employees**

Green performance management, firstly, is understood as monitoring and incentive systems to motivate employees in EM-related practices (Berrone & Gomez-Mejia, 2009; Longoni et al., 2016) or to align employees' green behaviors with organization's environmental objectives (Harvey et al., 2013; Guerci et al., 2016a). Green practices are emphasized in performance management such as

installing the environmental management information system and environmental audits (Jackson & Seo, 2010), adding it to wider performance management and appraisal system (Nejati et al., 2017), and setting green objectives included in appraisals for managers and executives (Renwick et al., 2013).

The second important practice is the green reward which can be understood as reinforcement to continuously motivate and improve commitment from employees who are aware of the environmental responsibility (Daily & Huang, 2001; Govindarajulu & Daily, 2004). To perform well this practice, organizations need to have policies including non-monetary rewards (Tang et al., 2018), monetary-based rewards (Jabbour, 2013; Tang et al., 2018), and recognition-based rewards in environmental management (Renwick et al., 2008, 2013; Nejati et al., 2017) for those who reach the desired environmental performance.

### **Creating green opportunities for employees**

According to Cotton (1993), green employee involvement can be defined as a participative process which uses employees' environmental capacity to encourage their commitment to organization's environmental targets. Green practices should be concerned including employees in actively consulting and suggesting solutions for the environmental problems (Renwick et al., 2013; Pinzone et al., 2016) and encouraging others to make suggestions to improve the environment (Daily et al., 2012). There is a wide range of practices such as sharing green initiatives with staffs (Renwick et al., 2013), creating 'green teams' to enhance the environmental efforts (Govindarajulu & Daily 2004).

For green organizational culture, which is defined as environmental issues dealt with as cultural values of an organization (Jabbour et al., 2010). In order to develop effective green culture in organizations, they need to concentrate on setting up systems for training, performance appraisals, and rewards systems linked with employees' environmental performance (Jabbour & Santos, 2008). Moreover, the environment-oriented policies in management (Chou, 2014) through green vision/mission for employees (Jabbour et al., 2010) should be concerned. Additionally, the top management's role is always the most important to developing organization's green culture (Masri and Jaaron, 2017).

## **2.2 GHRM and Internal Benefits**

### **GHRM-Enhancing employee human capital and motivation**

According to AMO theory, firstly, HRM practices can directly optimize the level of employee's skills, knowledge, and ability. GHRM practices, in turn, is also expected to contribute to employee human capital in environment aspect. In literature, Ren et al. (2017) suggest the advantage of GHRM practices for boosting employees' green awareness, knowledge, and skills. Specifically, Perron et al. (2006) argue that an effective environmental education and awareness training is one of the most important tools for EM to fill the gaps in employees' knowledge and skills. Jabbour et al. (2010) and Daily et al. (2012) also imply employees' environmental knowledge and skills that can be translated by building green ability through training and education system.

Secondly, Paille et al. (2013) address that HRM practices contribute to increase green motivation thanks to OCBE improvement and to improve employees' green attitudes by fostering the perceived supervisor and organizational supports and strengthening their organizational commitment. Empirically, Pinzone et al. (2016) prove the necessity of GHRM practices (green competence, performance management, and employee involvement) to enhance employees' collective commitment to environmental changes and the voluntary behavior toward the environment. Thus, GHRM practices can be seen as an "end" in upgrading employees' changes about green attitudes and behaviors to improve green motivation (Ramus and Steger, 2000; Ren et al., 2017).

### **GHRM-Enhancing environmental and financial performances**

According to AMO theory, Renwick et al. (2013) suggest that GHRM practices may have a necessary role in rising organizational performance via both environmental and financial performances because these practices are likely to increase employee well-being in the workplace through bringing the better working environment and fulfilling the demand of increasingly environmentally aware labors. In this case, the environmental performance is considered as an indicator of organizational performance (Harris and Crane, 2002; Deckop et al., 2006; Richard et al., 2009; Longoni et al., 2016). Generally, the adoption of GHRM could be expected to achieve both tangible and intangible benefits in saving cost and decreasing environmental problems (Jabbour and Santos, 2008; Lee, 2009). In literature, Perron et al. (2006) agree that engagement of EM initiatives may help improve organization's environmental performance and other benefits such as financial savings and risk of liability.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Due to the limitations of previous studies about GHRM in the hotel industry, the inductive research approach with the qualitative method is adopted to understand better the nature of the problem in GHRM practices in hotels (Saunders et al., 2009). The used research strategy is the case study to investigate why hotels apply GHRM practices in order to get rich understandings of this contemporary and complex phenomenon in depth (Yin, 2014).

We choose 4-5-star hotels in Vietnam to conduct this study because many national and international hotels in Vietnam are proactively in engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility policy with the emphasis on environmental protection in 4-5-star hotels (Le and Ferguson 2016). Also, prior studies about EM collected data from 4-5 star-hotels (Chan et al., 2014; Zientara & Zamojska, 2016; Alonso-Almeida et al., 2017). Hence, choosing 4-5-star hotels in Vietnam is appropriate to conduct a qualitative study related to GHRM practices. This study chooses two cases. Particularly, case P (Hotel P) is a five-star international hotel and is totally managed by a multinational corporation which has a long history of operating in hotel service over the world. Case M (Hotel M) was opened in 2010, it is a four-star private hotel owned and managed by a private corporation operating in tourism, real estate, construction, etc.

In this study, the semi-structured and in-depth interviews are chosen to gather data. Four managers and four employees are chosen, who are in charge of implementing environmental activities. Moreover, they are full-time employees, at least 18 years of age and at least one experience year in 4-5- star hotels. The interviewing schedule has three main steps: warm-up, development, and closing. Firstly, we give entirely interviewers' information and research purposes to participants. Interviewees' personnel information is checked again. Then, interviewees are asked about the implementation of GHRM practices in their hotels to clarify “Why” these practices are necessary to apply in hotels. The closing step aims to confirm and add more related information. The interview is conducted in Vietnamese language to avoid misunderstandings, and it is then translated to English.

**Table 1. Characteristics of participants**

No.	Participants (Code)	Case	Position	Experience in hotel (year)
1	MP1	P	Manager of administration department	5
2	MP2	P	Manager of front office department	5
3	EP1	P	Employee of maintenance department	3
4	EP2	P	Employee of housekeeping department	3
5	MM1	M	Manager of human & training department	7
6	MM2	M	Manager of maintenance department	6
7	EM1	M	Senior employee of kitchen room	4
8	EM2	M	Senior employee of maintenance department	4

Source: Authors

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Case P

Hotel P always acclaims environmentally friendly activities to develop actively the social and environmental values.

*Social responsibility is highlighted in the hotel's vision and value... (MP1).*

They have been concentrating on the social and environmental responsibility to ensure all members to grasp the hotel's green culture. This helps both employee and managerial levels to understand deeply the core value of hotel, which in turn boosts sustainably willingness and maintains commitment toward their environmental activities.

*We are aware fully of the important roles in translating hotel's eco-culture to both internal and external stakeholders, especially customers (MP1).*

*We understand the long-term benefits of setting up a green culture.... However, we will fail if missing employee's enthusiasm and commitment (MP2).*

In this hotel, creating opportunities for employees to involve the environmental activities is important. Reasons for encouraging the employee green involvement are the improvement of employee's environmental knowledge and skills, and their greater green commitment and behaviors, especially the green voluntary behavior.

*Encouraging to sharing my environmental suggestions or initiatives that helps me feel more confident and enthusiasm in performing these activities (EP1).*

*Thanks to helps from colleagues and leader, I gained a lot of knowledge and skills how to classify and identify waste and hazardous waste, to save water and energy, to sweep, mop and polish floors, etc. On the other hand, I also self-attempt to grasp these skills and knowledge by observing activities from others (EP2).*

In order to develop the green culture in the hotel, training about the environment has been concerned. They think that application of the environmental training is necessary for not only hotel's environmental and financial performance but also individual's environmental knowledge, skills and performance, the voluntary behavior.

*I feel that employees voluntarily and actively perform environmental activities after training (MP1)*

*At the end of 2014, I made many mistakes for cleaning carpets and rugs, and washing basins and showers. I was complained at least two times/month in six first working months. Currently, problems have not been regularly (EP2).*

Further motives are customer satisfaction and financial performance because of saving the cost of energy and water

*The final goal of the green strategy is to get more profit, only customers who create revenue and profits (MP2).*

### **Case M**

Hotel M has an emphasis on social responsibility embedded in Vietnamese culture conservation but there is a lack of a sustainable environmental strategy mentioned in vision and core value.

*The environmental issues are important, but it is not a strategic priority (MM1).*

In this study, the environmental training is important, and all employees are required to involve in this program. Hotel perceives internal benefits such as the environment-related knowledge, skill, and behaviors when applying this program.

*Employees are the most responsible for environmental activities... I feel that employees are more aware of and perform better environmental tasks after adequately trained about the environment (MM1).*

*After attending the training programs, employees take fewer mistakes in using ventilation, air conditioning, lights, washing machines, etc., especially new employees (EM2).*

In addition to the environmental training, hotel is concerned strongly with the environmental performance appraisal system. In fact, the environmental activities, monitored by managerial levels, help boost employee's responsibility and voluntariness in performing their environmental tasks.

*I am more aware of and participate actively environment-related tasks if I am supervised by supervisors. This motivates myself to learn skills and work harder to meet environmental tasks (EM1).*

The hotel also concerns about the environmental reward because it helps improve employees' morale and awareness in the environmental issues. Furthermore, the reward held in front of many employees inspires them to do effectively their tasks. Thus, the environmental reward is necessary to improve employee's environmental behavior and effectiveness.

*My colleague was rewarded last year. I feel now her more enthusiastic in environmental initiatives to solving environmental problems, such as cleaning the kitchen or using fridge and lights (EM1).*

*My friend was rewarded I think I should attempt to complete well my tasks to be recognized (EM2).*

Other reasons are the increases of hotel's environmental performance that enhance the financial performance because of saving energy and water consumption, and other environment-related costs.

*Employees have links with many environmental activities and costs, especially using water and electricity. Thus, doing well environmental tasks will bring environmental and financial benefits (MM2).*

## **5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

By investigating two above hotels, this study explores what internal benefits are to promote hotel's GHRM adoption. Based on the results, the necessity of boosting employee's green knowledge, awareness, skills is highlighted by both hotels. This finding is appropriate with previous studies (Jabbour et al., 2010; Daily et al., 2012; Ren et al., 2017). Perron et al. (2006) also argue that an effective environmental training program needs to fill the gaps in employees' knowledge and skills.

Similarly, GHRM application is also necessary to enhance green motivation through green commitment and behavior of employees working in two hotels. This finding supports the conclusion of Paille et al. (2013) and Pinzone et al. (2016). For instance, Pinzone et al. (2016) indicate the important role of GHRM practices in enhancing employees' collective commitment to environmental changes and the voluntary behavior toward the environment. The last similarity is the environmental and financial performance concerned by hotels. This is because implementing well hotel's environmental policies that will help decrease many costs of water and energy consumption. However, we recognize a difference related to employee's green voluntary behavior. Specifically, hotel P pays more attention to GHRM application (green training, green employee involvement) to boost employee's green voluntary behavior than hotel M. This is explained through the differences in hotel's top management and green strategy. In fact, hotel P has been managed by a multinational hospitality corporation from a Western country, and hence hotel must follow the regulations from the mother corporation, especially green activities to develop a sustainable green strategy. By contrast, hotel M has been managed by a Vietnamese company operating in many different industries. Also, the green strategy is not one of the hotel priorities in their vision and value. This can influence the environmental policies applied to employees, which causes employee's different response such as their commitment or green voluntary behavior.

From the above findings, this study has the contribution in applying the AMO theory to answer the research objectives. Particularly, both hotels emphasize the increase in employees' human capital (e.g. green awareness, knowledge, skill) and green motivation (e.g., green commitment and behavior). Also, we also recognize hotel's concerns in boosting the environmental performance of both employees and hotels and hotel's financial performance. Furthermore, these findings show that internal benefits when applying GHRM practices in the hotel industry are confirmed.

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