

ASSIGNMENT TITLE: TALENT MANAGEMENT

TOPIC

**TALENT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR
POST-COVID TOURISM STARTUPS (REPORT)**

STUDENT NAME: MANSI DHANJAL

STUDENT ID: DE240028

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title	Page no.
Introduction	
Background	3-4
Objective	5
Main Body	
1. Prioritizing Employee Well-being and Safety	6
2. Investing in Skill Development and Career Growth	7-10
3. Promoting Open Communication and Employee Engagement (Cultivating Trust)	11
4. Fostering a Culture of Belonging and Support (Re-establishing Loyalty)	12-15
5. Strategic Workforce Planning and Agility (Preparing for the Future)	16
6. Re-evaluate and Identify Key Skills for the New Tourism Landscape	17-18
7. Develop a Comprehensive Talent Acquisition and Retention Strategy	19
Conclusion	
Summary	20
Key Finding	21
Recommendations	22
References	23-25

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Our hotel chain, a relatively new and dynamic entity in the lively South American hospitality industry, was experiencing robust growth before 2020.

However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 introduced unprecedented challenges. South America, similar to much of the globe, encountered severe travel restrictions, lockdowns, and a significant downturn in tourism. Our hotels faced:

- **Massive Revenue Loss:** Bookings fell sharply, resulting in considerable financial pressure.
- **Operational Adjustments:** Numerous properties had to drastically reduce operations, with some even temporarily shutting down.
- **Workforce Disruption:** This was arguably the most distressing aspect. We were compelled to make extremely tough choices, including temporary furloughs, reduced hours, and, in unavoidable situations, permanent layoffs, especially during the initial and most critical stages of the pandemic.
- **Employee Anxiety and Stress:** Even those who retained their positions encountered significant stress, worrying about their health and safety, the welfare of their families, and job security in a highly unpredictable environment.

The Present Challenge:

While our business is on the upswing, we are keenly aware that our workforce has experienced significant changes. Numerous skilled professionals have either exited the industry or pursued more stable job opportunities elsewhere. For those who have stayed, their loyalty may have been challenged, and feelings of vulnerability might linger. We find ourselves at a crucial crossroads:

- **Re-staffing and Talent Acquisition:** It is essential to draw in new talent while also inviting back former employees, if feasible.
- **Re-engaging Existing Staff:** It is crucial to ensure that our current workforce feels appreciated, secure, and motivated.
- **Addressing Lingering Trauma:** The emotional and psychological effects of the pandemic on our team must not be overlooked.
- **Building for the Future:** We need to create a workforce that is not only strong enough to navigate the ongoing recovery but also resilient to any future, unexpected challenges. The hospitality sector has evolved, with heightened guest expectations concerning hygiene, technology, and personalized service.

1.2 Objective

- **Re-establish and Deepen Staff Loyalty:** To nurture a highly dedicated and engaged workforce that perceives itself as valued, respected, and secure within the organization, significantly lowering voluntary turnover rates and boosting long-term retention.
- **Cultivate a Resilient and Adaptable Workforce:** To cultivate a workforce endowed with diverse skills, robust problem-solving abilities, and a proactive attitude, enabling the hotel chain to adeptly navigate future disruptions (such as economic fluctuations, public health emergencies, and technological progress) and swiftly adapt to changing market requirements.
- **Enhance Employee Well-being and Psychological Safety:** To establish a supportive and healthy work atmosphere where employees feel physically secure, emotionally stable, and have access to resources that enhance their overall well-being, while recognizing and addressing the lingering effects of the pandemic.
- **Optimize Talent Acquisition and Retention:** To attract, recruit, and retain the top talent essential for operational excellence and future growth, while effectively assimilating new hires into the company culture and offering clear career development opportunities.
- **Strengthen Organizational Culture and Communication:** To promote a transparent, inclusive, and collaborative culture where employees feel empowered, heard, and connected to the company's mission and values, thereby reinforcing trust between management and staff.

2. MAIN BODY

As the HR Director for our growing South American hotel chain, I understand that recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and restoring staff loyalty depends on creating a truly resilient workforce. This is not just about recovering; it’s about preparing for future challenges and cultivating an environment where our employees feel appreciated, secure, and empowered.

1. Prioritizing Employee Well-being and Safety

Our first step must be to clearly show our dedication to employee well-being. The pandemic exposed vulnerabilities, and we must demonstrate that we have learned and adapted.

- **Enhanced Health & Safety Protocols:** Beyond mere compliance, we will establish and consistently communicate strong health and safety protocols across all locations. This includes readily available PPE, clear sanitation procedures, and access to health resources or information.
- **Mental Health Support:** The psychological impact of the pandemic on individuals and families is significant. We will introduce and promote access to mental health resources, such as confidential counselling services, employee assistance programs (EAPs), or collaborations with local mental health professionals.
- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** While many hotel positions require on-site presence, we will consider flexible scheduling options, part-time roles, or staggered shifts where operationally possible.



2. Investing in Skill Development and Career Growth

A resilient workforce is an adaptable workforce. We will make substantial investments in upskilling and reskilling our employees to equip them for changing guest expectations and possible future disruptions.

- **Cross-Training Initiatives:** We will establish extensive cross-training programs that enable employees to acquire skills across various departments (e.g., front desk personnel learning fundamental food and beverage skills, housekeeping staff assisting with guest relations).



Figure 1. Cross-Training Initiatives

(source: hiringbranch.com)

• **Digital Literacy & Technology Training:** The pandemic has hastened the adoption of digital technologies. We will offer training on new hotel management software, online booking systems, contactless technologies, and data analytics. This ensures our staff are adept and confident in using contemporary tools.



Figure 2. Main characteristics of digital competence
(source: mdpi.com)

- **Leadership Development:** We will identify and cultivate high-potential employees for leadership positions. This will include training in crisis management, empathetic leadership, conflict resolution, and change management. Promoting from within is a strong driver of employee loyalty.



Figure 3. Leadership Development Intervention Model
(source: outlife.in/experiential-leadership-development-training)

- **Language and Cultural Immersion:** In light of our South American context, investing in language training (e.g., English, Portuguese, Spanish) and cultural sensitivity workshops will improve guest experiences and boost employee confidence.

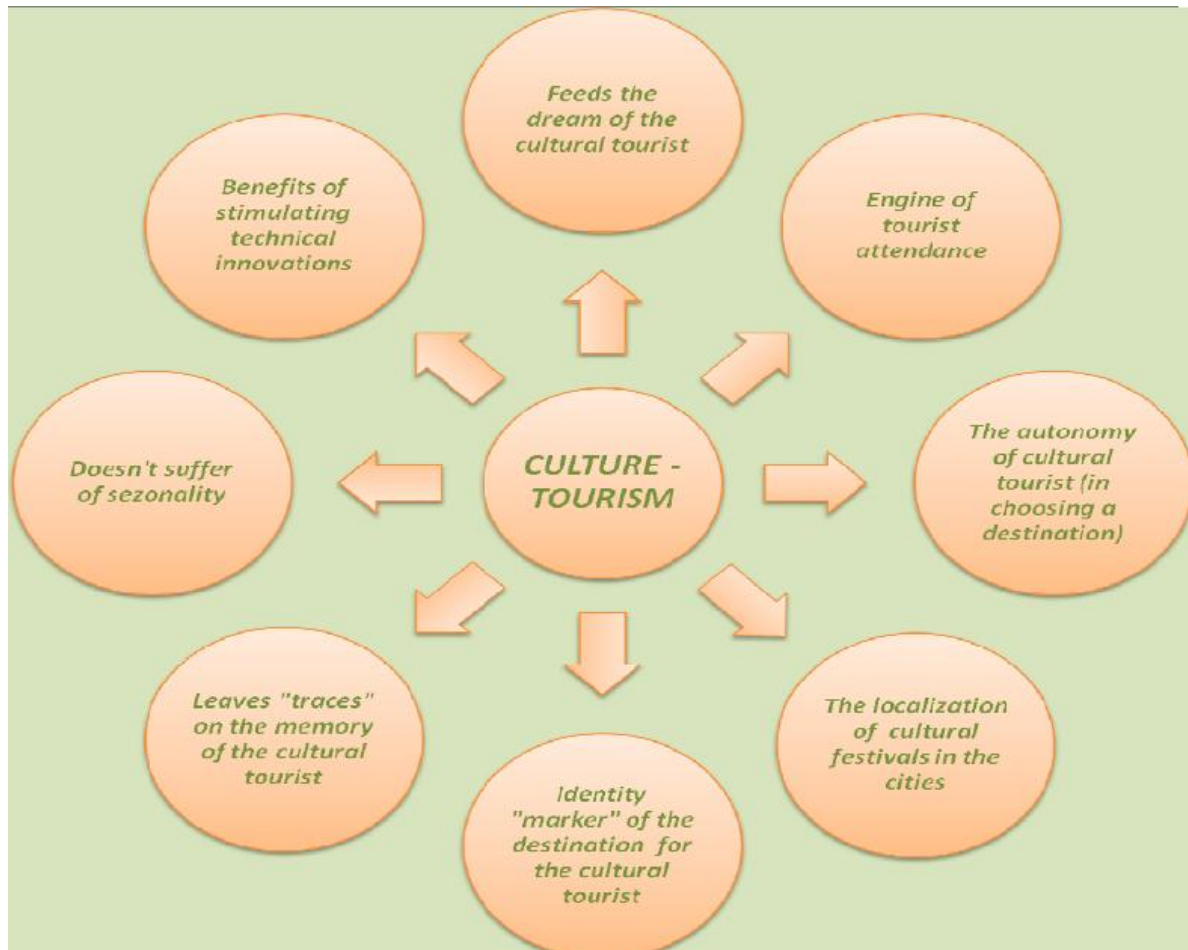


Figure 4. Cultural tourism
(source: researchgate.net)

3. Promoting Open Communication and Employee Engagement (Cultivating Trust)

During times of uncertainty, it is essential to maintain clear and consistent communication. We must work to restore trust through transparency and attentive listening.



Figure 5. Example of Employee Engagement Actions Plans
(source: questionpro.com)

- **Frequent Town Halls & Open Forums:** We will hold regular, transparent town hall meetings (either in-person or virtual) where leadership provides updates on the organization, addresses concerns, and responds to inquiries.
- **Two-Way Feedback Channels:** Establish accessible avenues for employees to share feedback, suggestions, and concerns without fear of retaliation. This may include suggestion boxes, pulse surveys, or dedicated HR hotlines.

Achieving Effective Two-Way Communication

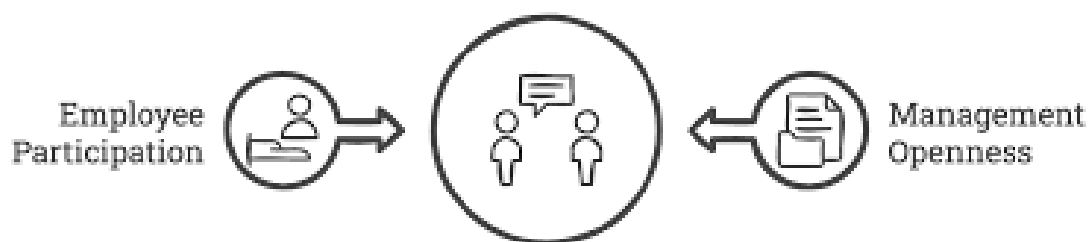


Figure 6. Two-Way Feedback Channels

(source: questionpro.com)

- **Managerial Communication Training:** Provide our managers with the necessary skills to communicate effectively, empathetically, and consistently with their teams. They serve as the frontline of our communication strategy.
- **Recognition and Appreciation Programs:** Introduce both formal and informal recognition initiatives that honour employee achievements, tenure, and contributions. Simple expressions of gratitude and public recognition can have a significant impact.

4. Fostering a Culture of Belonging and Support (Re-establishing Loyalty)

Loyalty is cultivated through a sense of belonging and reciprocal support, particularly following challenging times.



Figure 7. The Vital Role of Loyalty in the Travel & Tourism Industry
(source: linkedin.com)



Figure 8. Tips To Build Loyalty
(source: medium.com)

- **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):** Consider the formation of ERGs centred around common interests or demographics (e.g., women in hospitality, young professionals, parents). These groups can nurture community and offer support.

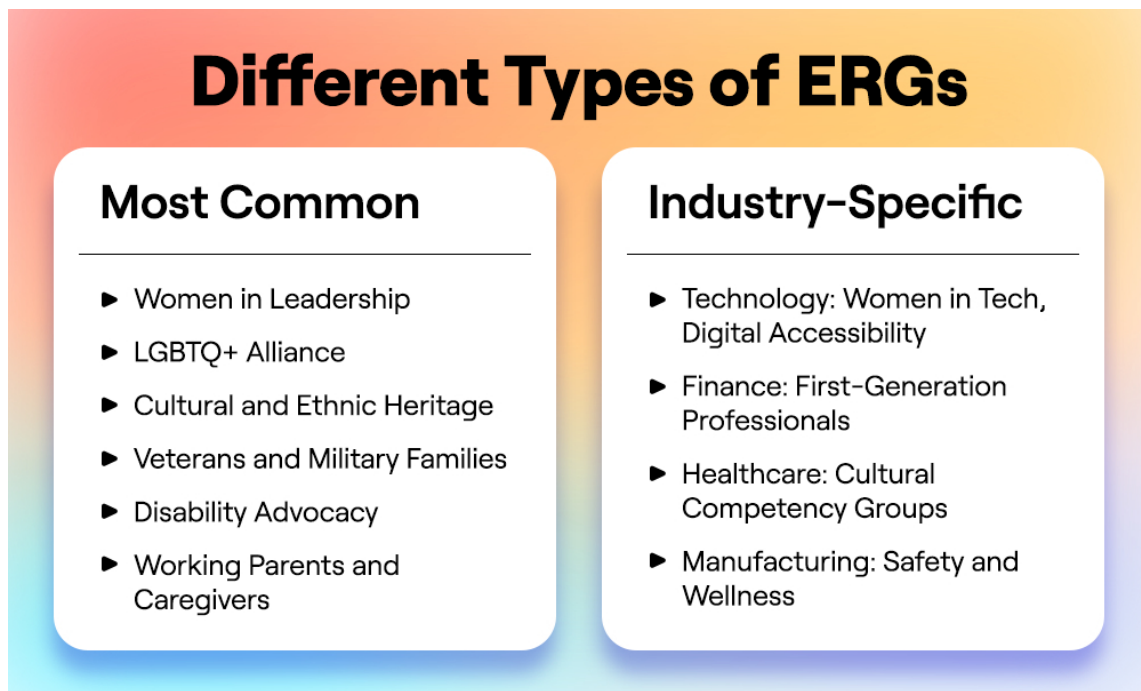


Figure 9. Different Types of ERGs
(source: medium.com)

- **Team-Building Activities & Social Events:** Plan regular team-building exercises, social events, and family-oriented activities to enhance interpersonal relationships and reinforce a sense of community beyond work responsibilities.



Figure 10. Team-Building

(source: jobsoid.com)

- **Community Involvement:** Promote and facilitate employee engagement in local community projects. This not only fosters team spirit but also enhances our brand's image and our employees' ties to the wider community.
- **Fair and Equitable Treatment:** Guarantee that all HR policies, compensation frameworks, and opportunities are implemented fairly and justly, fostering a sense of equity and minimizing potential sources of discontent.

5. Strategic Workforce Planning and Agility (Preparing for the Future)

Resilience involves preparing for upcoming challenges and adjusting quickly.



Figure 11. Strategic Workforce Planning
(source: aihr.com)

- **Scenario Planning:** Participate in consistent scenario planning activities to foresee possible disruptions (economic downturns, health crises, natural disasters) and formulate contingency plans for staffing, operations, and communication.
- **Talent Analytics:** Leverage HR data to pinpoint skill deficiencies, forecast turnover risks, and optimize staffing levels.
- **Contingent Workforce Strategy:** Investigate collaborations with temporary staffing agencies or create a pool of on-call employees for peak periods or unforeseen staff shortages.
- **Review and Update Policies:** Consistently assess and revise HR policies to guarantee they are flexible, compliant with changing labour laws, and conducive to a resilient workforce.

6. Re-evaluate and Identify Key Skills for the New Tourism Landscape

The pandemic accelerated shifts in the tourism industry, making certain skills more critical than ever. Startups should prioritize talent development in these areas:

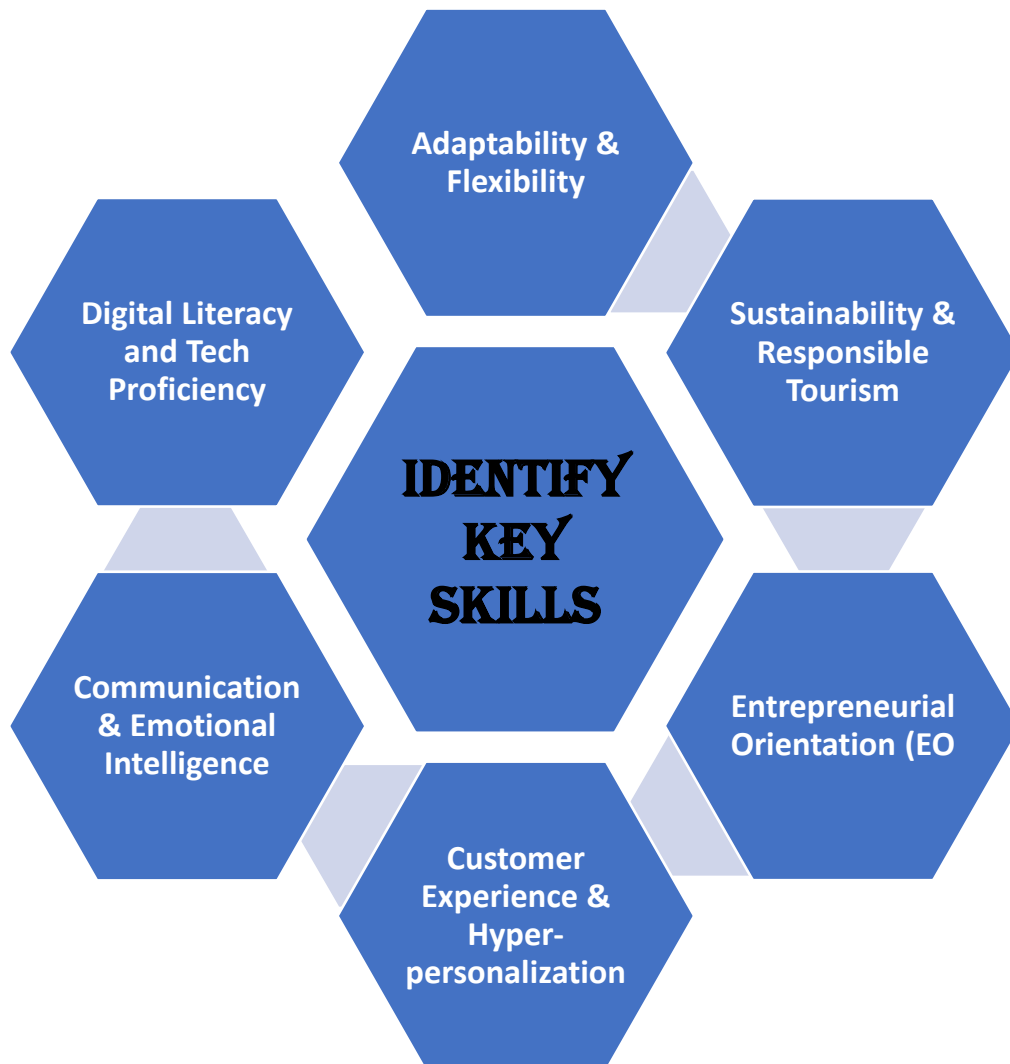


Figure 12. Identify Key Skills

- **Digital Literacy and Tech Proficiency:**
 - **Data Literacy:** Understanding and utilizing data analytics for personalized experiences, market insights, and operational efficiency (e.g., predicting demand, optimizing pricing).
 - **AI Tools:** Leveraging AI for personalized services, streamlined operations, and enhanced customer engagement.
- **Adaptability & Flexibility:** The industry is dynamic; employees must be able to adjust to changing consumer trends, health protocols, and market conditions. This includes accepting changes in work profiles, duty timings, and routines.
- **Communication & Emotional Intelligence:**
 - **Effective Communication:** Clear and empathetic communication with colleagues, customers, and partners.
 - **Emotional Intelligence:** Understanding and managing one's own emotions and those of others, crucial for navigating uncertainty and customer anxieties.
 - **Cultural Competence:** With diverse global travellers, understanding different cultural backgrounds is increasingly important.
- **Customer Experience & Hyper-personalization:** The ability to tailor services and products to individual customer needs and preferences, driven by digital data.
- **Sustainability & Responsible Tourism:** Growing demand for ethical and environmentally conscious travel. Employees need to understand and implement sustainable practices.
- **Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO):** A strategic mindset to actively seize possibilities, embrace risk, and pursue innovation, crucial for startups in a rapidly evolving environment.

7. Develop a Comprehensive Talent Acquisition and Retention Strategy

Attracting and retaining talent poses a considerable challenge in the post-COVID tourism industry. Startups need to set themselves apart.

Attraction:

- **Promote Value-Added Employment:** Emphasize opportunities for career advancement and skill enhancement.
- **Highlight Work-Life Balance:** Provide flexible working options (such as telecommuting and compressed workweeks) to appeal to a broader talent pool.
- **Competitive Salary and Benefits:** Although it can be difficult for startups, ensure that compensation is equitable and competitive to minimize turnover.

Retention:

- **Ongoing Learning and Upskilling/Reskilling: This is essential.**

Internal Training Initiatives: Create in-house workshops focused on new technologies, customer service excellence, and sustainable tourism practices.

Collaborations with Educational Institutions: Partner with universities and vocational schools to provide specialized courses and internships.

- **Defined Career Paths and Advancement Opportunities:** Establish clear career trajectories with chances for promotion, mentorship, and skill development.
- **Employee Acknowledgment and Feedback:** Create systems for recognizing outstanding performance and actively seek employee input to address issues.

CONCLUSION

Summary

In conclusion, for tourism startups emerging in the post-COVID era to succeed, it is imperative to implement a comprehensive strategy for talent development. This strategy should involve a thorough reassessment and prioritization of essential skills, including digital literacy, adaptability, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, customer experience, and sustainability, which are all vital in the evolving tourism sector.

A strong strategy should include diverse approaches to talent acquisition and retention, focusing on value-added roles, work-life balance, competitive salaries, and a supportive company culture, while also utilizing digital platforms for recruitment.

Moreover, specialized training initiatives that concentrate on digital transformation, sustainable tourism practices, excellence in customer service, crisis management, and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset are necessary. Ultimately, harnessing technology for development through Learning Management Systems (LMS), Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality (VR/AR), gamification, and AI-driven personalization, alongside nurturing an innovative and agile organizational culture.

Key Finding

Digital and Adaptive Skill Imperative: The most significant conclusion is the critical need for tourism startups to develop a workforce that is highly proficient in digital literacy (including data, marketing, AI, and automation) and demonstrates exceptional adaptability and flexibility. These skills are no longer optional; they are essential for successfully navigating the post-pandemic, rapidly changing, and technology-driven tourism environment.

Strategic Shift from Attraction to Retention via Continuous Development: Although attracting talent is crucial, the long-term success of organizations depends on a focused and ongoing commitment to employee upskilling and reskilling. The primary conclusion is that well-structured learning pathways, access to a variety of training options (such as online courses, partnerships, and cross-functional opportunities), and the promotion of a culture of continuous growth are the main factors driving talent retention in a competitive landscape.

Culture of Innovation and Resilience is Non-Negotiable: In addition to specific technical competencies, the strategy emphasizes that fostering an innovative, agile, and supportive organizational culture is a vital key finding.

Technology as an Enabler, Not Just a Tool: The strategy points out that the role of technology in talent development goes beyond being a mere tool; it serves as a crucial enabler. The key finding is the necessity to strategically utilize Learning Management Systems (LMS), artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and gamification to provide personalized, engaging, and effective learning experiences, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of talent development initiatives.

Recommendations

Prioritize a "Digital-First, Adaptability-Always" Training Mandate: Immediately integrate and continuously update training programs that build advanced digital literacy and cultivate strong adaptability, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills across all employee levels. This should be a non-negotiable, ongoing investment rather than a one-off initiative.

Establish a Robust, Growth-Oriented Employee Experience: Beyond competitive compensation, actively design and promote a workplace culture that emphasizes clear career progression through continuous learning opportunities (upskilling/reskilling), provides regular feedback and recognition, and fosters a sense of belonging and psychological safety.

Harness Learning Technologies for Scalable and Personalized Development: Systematically implement and fully leverage Learning Management Systems (LMS) for centralized content delivery, explore AI for personalized learning paths, and consider immersive technologies like VR/AR for practical skill development.

Cultivate an Entrepreneurial and Agile Organizational Culture: Actively foster an environment that encourages innovation, experimentation, and cross-functional collaboration. Empower employees to contribute ideas, provide them with autonomy, and build their capacity for resilience and proactive problem-solving to ensure the startup can rapidly respond to market shifts and seize new opportunities.

6. References

- Clarke, VL & Scurry, T 2020, 'The role of the psychological contract in shaping graduate experiences: a study of public sector talent management programmes in the UK and Australia', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 31, no. 8, pp. 965-991. Doi: 10.1080/09585192.2017.1396545.
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) 2020, *Malaysian Economic Statistics Review Volume 2*, viewed 10 July 2020, <https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/uploads/files/1_Articles_By_Themes/External_Sector/MESR/Malaysia_Economic_Statistics_Review-Vol-2-2020.pdf>.
- Dulcify, D 2020, Muhyiddin: tourism industry hit hardest by COVID-19, faces RM 3.37b loss, viewed 10 July 2020, <<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/03/13/muhyiddin-tourism-industry-hit-hard-by-covid-19-to-lose-rm3.37b-while-gdp-s/1846323>>.
- Foo, LP, Chin, MY, Tan, KL & Phuah, KT 2020, 'The impact of COVID-19 on tourism industry in Malaysia', *Current Issues in Tourism*. Doi: 10.1080/13683500.2020.1777951.
- Ivy Alliance Tourism Consulting, China Comfort Travel Group and Pacific Asia Travel Association 2020, *Survey report on Chinese tourists' travel intent after the end of COVID-19 epidemic*, viewed 10 July 2020, <<https://pata.org/store/publications/survey-report-on-chinese-tourists-travel-intent-after-the-end-of-covid-19-epidemic/>>.
- Kabwe, C & Okorie, C 2019, 'The efficacy of talent management in international business: The case of European multinational', *Thunderbird International Business Review*, pp. 857–872. Doi: 10.1002/tie.22090.
- Khan, MA & Hashim, H 2020, 'The effect of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality industry in Malaysia, resurgence in the post-pandemic era: A conceptual criterion', *International Journal of Tourism & Hospitality Reviews*, <https://doi.org/10.18510/ijthr.2020.726>.
- Koh, E 2020, 'The end of over-tourism? Opportunities in a post-Covid-19 world', *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 1015-1023. Doi: 10.1108/IJTC-04-2020-0080.

Kour, P, Macrofia, A & Gupta, S 2020, 'COVID-19: a pandemic to tourism guest-host relationship in India', *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 725-740. Doi: 10.1108/IJTC-06-2020-0131.

KPMG 2020, Covid-19: Managing change and uncertainty through a connected workforce, viewed 10 July 2020, <<https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/lu/pdf/covid-19-hr-advisory.pdf>>.

Lam, W, Huo, Y & Chen, Z 2018, 'Who is fit to serve? Person-Job/organization fit, emotional labour, and customer service performance', *Human Resource Management*, vol. 57, pp. 483-497.

Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) 2020, Hospitality, viewed 10 July 2020, <<https://www.mida.gov.my/home/hospitality/posts/>>.

McKinsey & Company 2020, Covid-19: Briefing materials, Global health and crisis response, viewed 10 July 2020, <<https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Risk/Our%20Insights/COVID%2019%20Implications%20for%20business/COVID%2019%20May%2027/COVID-19-Facts-and-Insights-June-1-vF.pdf>>.

Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture 2020, National tourism policy 2020-2030, viewed 24 May 2021, <https://www.tourism.gov.my/files/uploads/Executive_Summary.pdf>.

My Tourism Data 2021, Tourists arrivals, viewed 24 May 2021, <http://mytourismdata.tourism.gov.my/?page_id=14#!range=month&from=201901&to=202003&type=55872e6e2bd39,55872c90df266&destination=34MY>. OECD 2020a, Tourism policy responses to the coronavirus (COVID-19), viewed 10 July 2020, <https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=124_124984-7uf8nm95se&title=Covid-19_Tourism_Policy_Responses>.

Rahim, R 2020, Expand open border policy, govt urged, viewed 10 July 2020, <<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/06/22/expand-open-border-policy-govt-urged>>.

Rothaermel, FT 2013, *Strategic management: concept and cases*, Mc-Graw Hill.

Yeoh, L & Fu, E 2020, Malaysia: Combating the effects of novel coronavirus/COVID-19 on employment in organizations, viewed 10 July 2020, <<https://www.mondaq.com/employee-rights-labour-relations/906766/combating-the-effects-of-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-on-employment-in-organizations>>.

Sigala, M. (2020). Tourism and COVID-19: Impacts and implications for a tourism policy. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 7(3), 299-307. (While not directly about HR, it highlights the need for adaptability and innovation in response to crises, indirectly pointing to required skills.)

UNWTO (various reports): The World Tourism Organization frequently publishes reports on future trends and skill requirements in tourism. Look for recent publications related to digital transformation, sustainability, and human capital development post-2020.

European Commission - The Future of Tourism report: Reports from the EC often delve into the skills needed for the tourism sector in the context of digital and green transitions.

Buhari's, D. (2020). Technology in tourism—from information communication technologies to tourism and smart tourism towards ambient intelligence tourism: A perspective article. *Tourism Review*, 75(1), 11-21. (While pre-COVID, it sets the stage for the importance of digital tools and data, which accelerated post-COVID.)

Research on Big Data Analytics in Tourism: Numerous papers published in journals like *Journal of Travel Research*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, and *Tourism Management* discuss the growing importance of data literacy for personalized services and operational efficiency.

Jiang, Y., Ritchie, B. W., & Veres, J. (2019). The relationship between crisis communication, trust and reputation: An exploratory study of airlines in the aftermath of a major crisis. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 25(2), 229-242. (Though pre-COVID, the principles of crisis communication and trust building are now more critical than ever, influencing the need for emotionally intelligent and crisis-prepared staff.)

Studies on Organizational Resilience: Look for recent management and HR research on building resilient workforces, especially in sectors highly impacted by external shocks like tourism.

Fennell, D. A. (2020). *Ecotourism*. Routledge. (Focuses on the core principles, which now require staff to be educated and capable of implementing sustainable practices.)