

Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM) in Jordanian Hotels

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Abstract

This paper examines the adoption of strategic HRM in Jordanian hotels and explores the relationships between certain organizational characteristics - size, ownership, classification - and the adoption of SHRM in these hotels.

A self-administered questionnaire was used to capture data from HR/personnel managers in hotels operating within the two most important tourist areas of Jordan (Petra and Aqaba).

The main findings of this study are: HRM in Jordanian hotels is characterized to some extent by some of the components of the SHRM approach except for: line management partnerships; corporate culture relationships and cost effectiveness evaluation. The findings demonstrate a strong statistical association between SHRM adoption and organizational size.

Keywords: Strategic human resource management, Hotels, Jordan

1. Introduction

There is a growing body of literature on strategic human resources management (SHRM) - a term which arguably emerged in 1981 with an article titled 'human resources management: a strategic perspective' by Devanna and Fombrum (Wright, 1998). Much of this growth can be traced to the competitive advantage, the business excellence and the resource based view literatures (Harris, 2009; Lado and Wilson, 1994; Wright et al., 2001). The growing interest in SHRM has developed primarily because many of the traditional sources of competitive advantage that companies have been able to rely on, such as patents, economies of scale, access to capital and market expansion, are being eroded by the growth of market based competition (Nolan, 2002; Wright et al., 2007; Alleyne et al., 2008). These sources of competitive advantage do not differentiate organisations in the way they once did. The business excellence literature and the resource based view literature suggest that employees' core competences and capabilities are the key resources for competitiveness. Therefore their values and philosophies should be guided by, and be consistent with, the strategies proposed by the organization (Wright, 1998; Becker et al., 1997; Kim et al., 2010).

Hospitality is a labour-intensive service industry, depending for its success on the social and technical skills of its personnel, their ingenuity and hard work and their commitment and attitude. Although it is a cliché, it is true that people are therefore its most important resources. How to attract outstanding personnel, how to make

full use of employees' abilities and potentials in order to help achieve an organization's objectives is therefore of critical importance (Beardwell et al., 2004; Xiao, 2010). Unfortunately, however, the management of human resources in hotels is underdeveloped and lacking in sophistication (Wood, 1992; Nolan, 2002; Sommerville, 2007). In addition, the few studies which have investigated the uptake of HRM in hotel organisations, suggest that there is little attempt to integrate HRM practices with business strategy (Worsfold, 1999). However, most of the studies which have sought to establish the extent of the adoption of HRM have been carried out in manufacturing industries and little attention has been paid to the hotel and catering industries.

In emerging markets in general and in Jordan in particular, little has been researched or reported to produce a clear picture about the adoption of SHRM (Altarawneh, 2009). Consequently, this study aims to a) examine the adoption of strategic HRM in Jordanian hotels and b) explore the relationships between certain organisational characteristics - size, ownership, classification - and the adoption of SHRM in Jordanian hotels. Since a majority of SHRM studies has been conducted in developed countries, the present research will contribute to the literature by drawing its sample from Jordan, where there is an actual need for more research to be conducted and where many important decisions need to be made relating to HRM issues.

2. Literature review

2.1 Strategic human resource management (SHRM)

Strategic human resource management (SHRM) has developed as a field of management practice and an area of research since the mid-1980s. However, there is still a significant debate in the literature over the meaning of SHRM and the term human resource strategy (Boxall et al., 2007; Boxall and Purcell, 2000; Tompkins, 2002). Wright and McMahan (1992) argue that research inconsistently conceptualizes SHRM, making it difficult to assess adequately what exactly we know and do not know of the field.

SHRM can be defined as "the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable the firm to achieve its goals" (Wright and McMahan, 1992, p.298). This definition implies that there are at least four components to SHRM. First, it focuses on an organisation's human resources as the primary source to be leveraged strategically for competitive advantage. Second, the concept of activities highlights HR programs, policies and practices as the means through which the people of a firm can be managed to gain competitive advantage. Third, both pattern and plan describe the goal and process of strategy; a consistent alignment or design which could also be described as fit. The authors noted that this fit could consist of both vertical (with the organisation's strategy) and horizontal (all of the HR activities aligned with one another) aspects. Fourth, within this definition, the people, practices, and planned pattern are all determined, and relate to goal achievement.

More recently, SHRM has been defined, as ongoing efforts to align an organisation's personnel policies and practices with its business strategy Boxall et al. (2007). The interest in SHRM as a concept reflects a growing awareness that human resources are the key to success in organizations. In spite of this, the relevance of SHRM for many organizations is far from clear. Moreover, Hall et al. (2009) argue that strategic human resources management is largely about integration and adaptation. Its concern is to ensure that: 1) human resources management is fully integrated with the strategy and the strategic needs of the organization; 2) HR policies fit together both across policy areas and across hierarchies; and 3) HR practices are adjusted, accepted, and used by line managers and employees as part of their everyday work.

Collectively, these viewpoints suggest that SHRM has many different components, including policies, practices, values, and culture. The various statements also imply that SHRM links, integrates, and coheres across different levels in organizations. Its overall purpose is to utilize effectively human resources in respect of the strategic needs of the organization. Agreement seems to have emerged around the identification of the factors which maximize organizations' performance as the major goal to be achieved within research on strategic HRM (Wright, 1998; Hall et al., 2009).

2.2 SHRM models, components and requirements

2.2.1. SHRM 'best fit' or 'best practice'

Most research and theoretical debate in SHRM has focused on two normative models of how organizations should make strategic choices in human resource management (Boxall and Purcell, 2000; Boxall et al., 2007). One model is the 'best-fit' discipline which argues that HR strategy will be more proficient when it is integrated properly with its specific organizational and environmental context. Baird and Meshoulam (1988) argue that HR practices must fit the organization's stage of development; they describe it as 'external fit' or

'vertical fit'. This implies according to them informal, more flexible, styles of HRM among start-up organizations and more formal, professionalized styles as organizations become more mature and increase the number of their employees. They also argue for 'internal fit', for the need to ensure that individual HR policies are designed to 'fit with and support each other'; something they call it 'horizontal fit' (Boxall and Purcell, 2000).

However, the most significant 'best-fit' model has been one in which external fit is determined by the organization's competitive strategy, rather than its stage of development (Boxall and Purcell, 2000; Boxall et al., 2007; Chen and Huang, 2009). In this model, the basic guidelines for strategic HRM involves aligning HR strategy, plans and policies with business needs. Schuler and Jackson's (1987) argue that HR activities and practices should be designed to support the behavioural implications of the various generic strategies defined by Porter (1985). This implies that organizational performance will improve when HR practices support mutually the organization's predetermined choice of cost leadership, differentiation or focus as its competitive position (Boxall and Purcell, 2000).

The other model of SHRM activists universalism, arguing that all organizations will be in a strong situation if they recognize and implement best practice in the way they manage people. Definitions of best practice are always drawn from research on the four preferred sub functions of undergraduate personnel psychology: selection, training, appraisal and pay (Boxall and Purcell, 2000; Boxall et al., 2007). Lists of best practice are often weak or silent on issues concerning work organization and employee influence (Marchington and Grugulis 2000). However, it must be recognized that aspects of best practice are widely acknowledged by researchers and practitioners (Delery and Dory, 1996; Tompkins, 2002; Boxall and Purcell, 2000; Boxall et al., 2007).

2.2.2 SHRM prerequisites and components

There remain many unresolved issues about the implementation of SHRM and the probability of its success (Becker and Huselid, 2006; Boxall et al., 2007). If SHRM is to succeed in essentially changing the role of the human resources department and the practices of personnel management, greater clarity is required regarding the concept of SHRM and how it is to be implemented in organizations (Tompkins, 2002; Hall et al., 2009). Accordingly, a number of requirements and conditions for SHRM adoption and success have been suggested. For SHRM to be implemented successfully, certain structural and procedural requirements must be satisfied. These core requirements include the following:

2.2.2.1 An established strategic planning process

The role of strategic planning is to provide organizations with a clear logic or direction by clarifying mission, settling main concerns, and identifying goals and objectives (Tompkins, 2002). The literature suggests that the objectives of SHRM are best achieved through a company-wide strategic planning process in which top managers identify strategic objectives for the entire organization and managers develop their operational plans accordingly. In addition, the strategic planning required for SHRM may be accomplished in a variety of ways. It may be externally or internally oriented, or mandated from above for purposes of accountability, or adopted voluntarily or it may include a temporary, problem-specific process, or an ongoing institutionalized process for goal setting and issues management (Tompkins, 2002; Wright et al., 2001; Harris, 2009). Supporters of SHRM tend to presume an institutionalized, internally oriented strategic planning process adopted by organizations to identify their missions, set priorities, and choose upon strategic objectives (Osborne and Ted, 1992; Bryson and William, 1987; Tompkins, 2002; Boxall et al., 2007; Hall et al., 2009).

2.2.2.2 Involvement of the HR director in the strategic planning process

SHRM requires more than an established strategic planning process. It also requires the full involvement of the HR director in that process. This is necessary to ensure that the strategic plans under debates are evaluated in terms of their implications for human resources (Tompkins, 2002). Involvement by the HR director is also necessary so that the HR personnel staff can get a better and more full understanding of the organization's mission and the issues confronting line managers. However, organization executives have tended to view HR personnel managers as staff performing relatively routine functions and occupying a quite low status in the organizational plan of things (Tompkins, 2002; Huselid and Becker, 2006; Harris, 2009). Accordingly, they have not been inclined to engage HR directors in strategic discussions. At the same time many HR personnel directors have been slow to be firm upon a strategic role because their professional training has not prepared them to carry out such a strategic role. Training in personnel management tends to put emphasis on the administration of personnel systems rather than general management or organizational development (Tompkins, 2002).

2.2.2.3 A clear formal written statement of HRM objectives and plans

Strategic goals and objectives are the key products of the planning process, and they are often affirmed in a written plan. This plan offers a helpful direct to the HR\personnel department as it aims to align existing policies and practices with strategic objectives. The HR\personnel department can develop its own plan for relating or linking its goals to the organization's goals or staff can be reminded of the need to factor the organization's strategic goals into its day by day operations (Popovich, 1998; Tompkins, 2002; Boxall et al., 2007). Although this requirement emerges simple, most discussions of strategic planning fail to define what the term strategy or strategic objective means in reality (Tompkins, 2002; Boxall and Purcell, 2000; Boxall et al., 2007). In private sector organizations which practice SHRM, a business strategy is planned to provide them a competitive edge over other organizations in their industry (Porter, 1980). Once a business strategy is chosen, specific objectives can be identified and the task of aligning HR\personnel policies and practices can begin.

2.2.2.4 Aligning HRM policies and practices with strategic objectives

The most important requirement of SHRM is the alignment of HR\personnel policies and practices with the organization's strategic objectives, which is otherwise called vertical fit or integration (Hall et al., 2009; Chen and Huang, 2009; Ahmad and Schroeder 2003; Vlachos, 2008; Tompkins, 2002; Boxall et al., 2007). While many examples of alignments have been reported in the literature, no categorization scheme has yet been suggested to capture how alignments are accomplished (Delery and Shaw, 2001; Tompkins, 2002; Wright and Sherman, 1999; Way and Johnson, 2005). Generally, the reported examples tend to drop into one or more of the following categories: adapting to environmental change - this includes actions taken by the HR\personnel departments in response to external trends; building human capacity to support strategic initiatives - this involves forecasting future staffing needs and taking steps to recruit new employees or to train existing employees to meet the forecast demand; integration with organizational culture; preparing employees for change. In addition to taking steps to develop a new organizational culture, the HR department can also take steps to prepare employees for impending changes (Tompkins, 2002).

2.2.2.5 Other important requirements

The above mentioned four requirements of SHRM cannot be fulfilled unless the HR department changes deeply the way it does business (Hall et al., 2009; Boxall et al., 2007; Tompkins, 2002; Way and Johnson, 2005). Supporters of SHRM have suggested some recommendations in this regard. First, HRM must develop and expand the capability it needs to support strategic plans; this implies that it must develop staff knowledge in job design, organizational development, change management, employee motivation, and human resource theory (Tompkins, 2002; Boxall et al., 2007). In addition, HR\Personnel staff must also develop knowledge of general management and the specific personnel problems confronting managers. Whether this strategic role should be allocated to a particular unit within HR or should be expected of all HR\personnel staff remains an unanswered question. Since the strategic and operational roles of HRM are conflicting in many respects, performing both roles in an integrated fashion will remain an ongoing challenge (Tompkins, 2002)..

Another important issue is the line managers partnership, which cannot be forged as long as HRM is perceived by organization managers as an enforcer of rules and a source of overwhelming rules and regulations (Tompkins, 2002; Chen and Huang, 2009; Way and Johnson, 2005). According to SHRM proponents, a service orientation can be established by assigning primary responsibility for HRM to managers and creating service teams consisted of personnel generalists to help managers in achieving mission related objectives (Tompkins, 2002; Offstein et al., 2005; Huselid and Becker, 2006). Under this suggestion, HR\personnel generalists are to execute a service oriented role both when managing personnel systems, such as categorization and pay, and when consulting with other line managers about specific HR\personnel issues or objectives. If HRM is to contribute more directly to an organization's mission, shifts in role orientation are important.

These prerequisites confirm what is required to integrate strategic planning with human resources management in a way that improves organizational performance. Such integration is difficult to achieve if there is no strategic planning process in place, no participation by the HR\personnel manager and no subsequent development of HR\personnel plans designed to support identified objectives (Tompkins, 2002; Popovich, 1998; Boxall et al., 2007; Hall et al., 2009).

3. Methodology

Most of the previous studies concerning HRM and SHRM have been conducted in a number of different industries at the same time (Davision et al., 1996; Ichniowski, 1990; Huselid, 1995). Cappelli and Neumark (2001) supported the investigation of these issues within a single industry, with a limited population. In particular it has been suggested that (the measurements of) variables are more likely to be defined clearly when a study focuses on a particular industry, and that “within an industry, studies automatically control for factors that differ among industries” (Ichniowski et al., 1995, p. 304).

Jordan is a small (population 6 million) country in the Middle East of important geopolitical significance. It occupies a strategic location northwest of Saudi Arabia at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. Despite popular perceptions of the Middle East region, Jordan has no oil and few natural resources. The country is potentially highly vulnerable to external shocks, given its size and natural resource endowment. Despite this fact Jordan ranks well on the Global Competitiveness Index and its 2008 ranking is 46 out of the 134 countries reported on (Aldehayyat, 2011; Fischer et al., 2009).

Tourism is considered as a key driver of Jordan’s economy; currently it is the single largest employer. Jordan is one of the few countries in the Middle East to witness annual growth in the tourism industry. With its regional spread, tourism is an ideal industry to diffuse benefits across Jordan, and during the past few years, tourism has been responsible for generating a significant increase in foreign and domestic investment (JTDPII, 2009). Employment in the tourism industry, including indirect employment, was estimated at around 130,000 (11% of the work force). The tourism industry itself employs 34,405 people, of which 77.5% were in the hotels and restaurant industry (Fischer et al., 2009).

3.1 Research population and respondents

All hotel organizations operating in Aqaba and Petra, in southern Jordan, were the population of this study due to the fact that this is the centre of the tourism industry in Jordan and therefore the region with the highest density of international hotels. The names and addresses of the targeted hotels were drawn from the website of the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. The population of the study includes all 80 HR managers who worked in the targeted hotels during the survey.

A self-administered structured questionnaire was used to examine the adoption of SHRM in Jordanian hotels. The questionnaire was pre-tested, modified, and used to capture data on a cross-section of HR managers in the targeted Jordanian hotels. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts. The first part measured the adoption of SHRM, based on the studies of Tompkin (2002); Popovich (1998); Garavan (1991); Garavan et al. (1999); McCracken and Wallace (2000). In total 15 items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. The second part included questions related to organizational classification (five stars, four stars, three stars, two stars and one star); organizational size, as measured by the number of employees in each hotel; ownership - multinational or locally owned; participants’ work experience; and whether or not the organization had a particular department or section for HRM.

All HRM managers in the 80 hotels operating in Petra and Aqaba were targeted. All CEOs in the targeted hotels were contacted via a formal letter and/or a telephone call which described briefly the objectives of the study. An appointment was requested to discuss further their responses. At these meetings, the entire research objectives were explained and the organizations were encouraged to participate further in the study.

The questionnaires were distributed to HRM managers and the researchers tried to establish direct contact with key HRM informants. The objectives of the research were explained to each respondent in order to establish trust, and to be regarded positively and to make demands to them on the basis of the worth of the study (Saunders et al., 2005). Respondents had the choice to hand back the questionnaire during the same visit or to send it back via the postal system.

In total 80 questionnaires were distributed to HR managers. 45 valid responses were received – the response rate was, therefore, 56.2%, which is a good rate compared to other similar studies.

3.2 Characteristics of respondents

Table 1 presents the profiles of participating hotels. It shows that among the participating hotels there were 13 five stars hotels and just two with a one star classification. The study excluded hotels that did not have a specific section for HRM. 58% of hotels were owned by foreign companies. 73% - 33 hotels- had between 1-100 employees and just 12 hotels had more than 100 employees. 60% of HRM managers had more than six years work experience in the HR field. 20 hotels had specific departments for HR and 18 hotels had sections within

departments for HR. 27 hotels identified the HR section as personnel departments while 18 hotels called them the HR department.

Table 1 – about here

4. SHRM in Jordanian hotels

Table 2 and Table 3 – about here

4.1 Clearly defined HRM strategic plans

Table 2 show that the hotels have moderately clearly defined formal (written) HRM strategic plans and policies, since the mean score given to each of the variables is more than 3. Table 3 shows that having clearly defined strategies for HRM is positively related to hotel size and classification respectively. Similarly, having formal (written) HRM policies is also related positively to hotel size and classification respectively. Hence, it could be argued that all the targeted hotels believe in the importance of the planning stage for HRM. On the other hand, it was found that there are statistically significant differences in relation to hotel ownership in terms of having formal HRM strategies and plans. Comparison of the mean scores shows that foreign owned hotels engage in a formal planning process more than locally owned hotels. In summary it was found that 80 per cent of Jordanian hotels have written strategies, plans and policies for HRM.

These findings are consistent with the results of Alleyne et al. (2008) who investigated the relationship between the number of human resource management (HRM) practices adopted and organizational demographics among hotels in Barbados, as well as determining the extent to which strategic human management (SHRM) is practiced. They found that all hotels engaged in strategic planning and the majority had a HR strategy which was endorsed formally and supported actively by the hotel's top management and that HRM strategies are integrated with business strategies as well as with each other.

Although HRM strategies, plans and policies may exist and may well be developed in the context of corporate organizational strategy in most hotels, it was felt vital to examine whether the role of HRM manager is a reactive or proactive one in relation to the development of the business strategies of Jordanian hotels.

4.2 Strategic role for HR managers

Table 2 shows that HR managers participate to a considerable extent in the formulation of their hotel's overall strategies (*mean* 3.66). In addition, HR managers act as consultants and participate in the hotel's board meeting in most cases (*mean* 3.75). HR managers' consultation role is related positively to hotel size and classification respectively. Statistically significant differences between the two ownership types, in terms of a strategic proactive role for HR managers, were found. Comparison of the mean scores shows that foreign hotels' managers have a more proactive role in strategy than local hotels' managers. (Table 3).

It could be argued therefore that there is some evidence to suggest that the HR managers in Jordanian hotels have developed a strategic role. There were indications that they were adopting consultancy roles in their organizations and perhaps also becoming more involved at a strategic level. Having said that, it could be that the positive responses to this issue were a reflection of aspiration rather than reality. These findings are consistent with those of McCracken and Wallace (2000) in their survey of the reality of SHRM in 127 organizations from different industries in Lothian and central Scotland; they found that HRD executive managers had become consultants in their organizations. However, Nankervis and Debrah (1995) found in their survey of hotels in Australia and Singapore that there was little evidence in either country that the roles of personnel/human resource specialists in such hotels had moved beyond traditional administrative functions and towards more modern strategic practices.

4.3 Integration with organizational strategies

The results presented in Table 2 show that there is relative harmony between HRM strategy, plans and policies and other departments' plans and policies (*mean* 3.71). HRM plans and policies are to some extent integrated with and derived from the hotel's overall plans and policies (*mean* 3.62). The results presented in Table 3 indicate positive relationships between hotel size and classification and the two items used to measure the third SHRM component– namely the integration of HRM strategy, plan and policies with other departments' plans in the hotel; and the integration of HRM plans with the hotel's overall plans. However, no statistically significant differences were found between the two ownership categories in terms of integration with organizational strategies.

Most of the hotels, in addition to having defined formal written plans and policies for HRM, reported a very close link between HR strategy and business strategy. This finding supports that of other work, which

suggests that leading edge corporations are increasingly adopting HRM strategies that are linked directly to business objectives. Hoque's (1999) study found that UK hotels approached the management of human resources in a more strategic manner than that found in comparable manufacturing companies. Alleyne et al. (2008) found that HR strategies were integrated with business strategies and HR strategies were deliberately integrated with each other in the Barbados hotel industry.

4.4 Top management commitment and support

Four items were used to measure the fourth, but the most important, element of SHRM. The results in Table 2 show that the highest mean scores were for top managers' participation in formulating HRM plans and policies (3.840) and for HRM budget is sufficient to achieve its plans and objectives (3.200). Table 3 shows that the correlation between the size of hotel and top management commitment and support is positive for one statement; namely, HRM budget is sufficient to achieve its plans and objectives and negatively significant for one item; namely, top management is not committed to, supports, and provides all the facilitation to HRM activities. The same table shows a significant positive relationship between the classification and top management commitment and support for one statement; namely, HRM budget is sufficient to achieve its plans and objectives and negatively significant for one item; namely, top management is not committed to, supports, and provides all the facilitation of HRM activities. On the other hand, there are no statistically significant differences between the two ownership types, in terms of top management commitment and support.

It could be said that the results suggest evidence of top management support, involvement and commitment to HRM. Most of the participants gave assurances that HRM budgets existed and were sufficient. However, for the majority of organizations, there were few indications that such support had moved beyond passive compliance into anything remotely resembling the active leadership described by Harrison (1997). These findings are consistent with those of McCracken and Wallace (2000) who found in their survey of the reality of SHRM in 127 organizations from different industries in Lothian and Central Scotland that top or senior management were totally supportive of HRD issues.

4.5 Line manager support and partnerships

The need for shared ownership of HRM partnerships between key stakeholders in HRM has been stressed by a number of commentators (Garavan et al., 1999; Harrison, 1997; Becker and Huselid, 2006), but many of the same commentators would question whether such partnerships exist in reality. The empirical data from this study (Table 2) shows that line managers provide little coaching, monitoring and support for HRM. Their lack of support for HRM compared with top managers and their lack of involvement in strategic HRM issues indicates that the strategic partnerships suggested by McCracken and Wallace (2000), as an indicator of SHRM are in reality, at least for the hotels in this research, few and far between. Table 3 shows that line management partnership is negatively related to hotel size and positively with classification. There were no statistically significant differences between the two ownership categories.

4.6 Cost effectiveness evaluation

An emphasis specifically on the evaluation of cost effectiveness is considered as one of the most important characteristics of SHRM but the most problematic one since many HRM outcomes are intangible and need time to take effect (Huselid, 1995; Altarawneh, 2009; Way and Johnson 2005). It can be seen (Table 2) that little emphasis has been given by hotels to assess the cost effectiveness of HRM (*mean* 2.66). This item is negatively related to hotel size (Table 3). There are no statistically significant differences between hotel classification or the two ownership types in terms of cost effectiveness evaluation. Many earlier studies which have been conducted to assess the impact of HRM practices on organizational performance have demonstrated a positive relationship (e.g. Alleyne et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2010; Huselid et al., 1997; Becker and Huselid, 1999; Wright and Snell, 1991).

4.7 Organizational culture

Participants were asked whether HRM shaped or was shaped by corporate culture in their hotels. The results in Table 2 show that HRM strategies and policies are not shaped by corporate culture. Thus little attention and consideration are given to the hotels' culture when formulating HRM strategies and objectives (*mean* 2.288). Table 3 shows that the integration of HRM objectives with hotel culture is negatively related to hotel size and classification respectively. On the other hand, no statistically significant differences were found between the two ownership types in terms of organizational culture. These findings revealed a rather more patchy and

questionable picture, underlining the reality that culture is a complex, difficult and poorly understood concept (Williams et al., 1989; Cabrera and Bonache, 1999; Palthe and Kossek, 2004; Jackson and Schuler, 1995).

Much consideration should be given to cultural issues when formulating HRM strategies in order for the targeted hotels to succeed in the Jordanian market. In addition there is a need for HRM managers, particularly those in international hotels, to be more aware of Jordanian culture.

Cabrera and Bonache (1999) focused on the need to align an organization's culture with its strategy, they argue that a strong strategic culture can be created through two processes: planning HR practices that are aligned with the organization's strategy to promote the desired behavioural norms, and deliberately selecting candidates who share the desired values. The importance of culture as a mediating variable in the SHRM-performance "black box" has received continuing attention (Ostroff and Bowen, 2000; Hall et al., 2009). For instance Som (2007) has presented several propositions regarding the adoption of SHRM in India that in his opinion may also apply in other emerging economies. In particular, he found that organizational culture has influenced the adoption of SHRM in India.

4.8 Environmental scanning

It can be seen from Table 2 that HRM has flexible policies and plans adaptable to changing circumstances. Therefore hotels give a relatively high level of attention to environmental scanning (*mean* 3.51). Table 3 shows that environmental scanning has a positive relationship with hotel size and star rating. However, no statistically significant differences between the two ownership sectors, in terms of environmental scanning, were found. These findings are consistent with McCracken and Wallace (2000); Garavan et al, (2001); Som (2007). Therefore, the research revealed some evidence about the use of environmental scanning, but raised doubts about the extent to which management really considered the HRM implications of external change.

5. Conclusions, limitations and implications

HRM in Jordanian hotels is characterized by a number of SHRM components except for: line management partnerships; corporate culture relationship and cost effectiveness evaluation. These are all criteria that are considered as important for a strategic approach to HRM. In addition, there is a good level of investment in HRM in Jordanian hotels and managers themselves judge that their hotel management is committed to HRM. However, there is no evaluation of HRM results. In addition there is a lack of organizational culture integration with HRM strategies and policies and an absence of line management support and commitment to HR issues.

SHRM adoption was found to be more common in multinational hotels than in locally owned hotels. The available evidence from earlier studies in the hotel industry is contradictory. For instance, Kelliher and Johnson (1987) found that in small hotels the main functions of personnel management were to recruit and select staff, while in larger hotels more sophisticated practices were found. Hornsby and Kuratko (1990) compared personnel practices in different sized firms and found little difference in what respondents considered the most important personnel issues but in general there was a greater sophistication of personnel practices in larger firms. Price (1994) found a strong correlation between size and the presence of HRM style practices in the UK hotel and catering industry. Hoque (1999) presents a more positive view of HRM, favourably comparing the adoption of HRM practices in larger UK hotels with manufacturing organizations of a comparable size.

The results of the survey indicate that HRM in the hotels sampled display SHRM characteristics to a considerable extent irrespective of their size and classification (star rating). The hotel industry in Jordan is relatively homogenous, with most of the targeted hotels being multi-nationals that donate much money and attention to HR issues. In addition, the hotels in the sample target high spending tourists from the top of the market and for which they provide high quality hotel accommodation. In this context, the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and national tourism associations have pushed for higher levels of service quality and more investment in HR issues across the industry. The pressure for a high general standard of services in Jordan has pushed the hotels to provide a good level of investment in HRM practices.

It is important to note that in asking hotels about their approach to managing HR, almost all of the respondents always judged that they were performing at an average or above average level by comparison with other hotels. In addition most of the participating hotels were multinational corporations. It would also appear that there was an overall better take-up of HRM in Jordan compared with other studies, such as those by Story (1992); Nankervis and Debrah (1995); and Hoque (1999). However, one must acknowledge that the data on the other studies against which Jordan is being compared were collected in 1992, 1995, 1999. The situation in these locations is likely to have moved on since then.

The findings of this study have revealed several important implications for HR and other managerial practitioners in the Jordanian hotel industry for effective HRM\SHRM management and activities. HRM managers need to be responsible and able to convince other organizational people of the importance of HRM activities for the organisation's success. SHRM activities need to be systematic, linked and derived from the overall organizational strategies, plans and policies, rather than being piecemeal, stand alone activities, designed to react to the current organisational conditions. In addition, SHRM activities need to be integrated with, and in harmony with, organizational culture. Top managers and line managers need to be committed to, and supportive of SHRM through being involved in formulating SHRM strategies, plans and objectives.

Despite the important findings identified above, this study has several limitations. First, although a single industry analysis has its merits its generalizability may be constrained. A multi-industry study is better able to facilitate the understanding of issues in a particular country setting. Second, a single-country analysis places constraints on the ability to generalize the findings to other international settings. Third, as in any survey, the way in which the participants answered the questions in the questionnaire was consciously or unconsciously influenced by many factors (including their status in the organization, their personal credibility, their social, educational and professional background). In relying on only one key informant in each company, there was a risk that a personal viewpoint was being obtained which was not representative of the reality for the organization as a whole. However, it was felt that this problem was minimised by the fact that participants, as the most senior HRM representatives in their organizations, were clearly well informed about HRM issues and activities.

Nevertheless this is a timely and important study. Little research has been undertaken to investigate HRM or the adoption of SHRM within the Middle East in general or in Jordan in particular. The findings concerning the relationship between on the one hand size, classification (star rating) and ownership and on the other hand the adoption of a SHRM approach are of particular interest, particularly in the context of the under researched hotel sector.

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Table 1. Characteristics of the participating hotels

Characteristics	Frequency	%	Characteristics	Frequency	%
Classification			Having specific body for HRM		
One star	2	4.4	Yes	45	100
Two stars	7	15.6	No	0	0
Three stars	12	26.7	HRM structure		
Four stars	11	24.4	Unit within section	7	15.6
Five stars	13	28.9	Section within department	18	40
Ownership			Specific department	20	44.4
Local	19	42.2	Name of HR division		
Foreign	26	57.8	Personnel department	27	60
Employee number (hotel size)			HR department	18	40
Less than 50 employees	16	35.6	Experience in HR		
51-100 employees	17	37.8	Under 1 year	4	8.9
More than 100 employees	12	26.7	1-5	14	31.1
			6-10	13	28.9
			11-15	6	13.3
			16-over	8	17.8

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for each SHRM element

SHRM components	Mean	SD
Formal HRM strategies and plans		
The hotel has a clearly defined strategy relating to human resource management	3.577	1.215
The hotel has formal (written) HRM plans and policies	3.688	1.293
Strategic proactive role for HR managers		
HR managers participate in formulating the hotel's overall strategy	3.666	1.007
HR managers are consultants and participate in the hotel's board meeting	3.755	1.253
Integration with organizational strategies		
HR strategy, plan and policies are in harmony with the department's plans and policies in the hotel	3.711	1.115
HR plans and policies are integrated with and derived from the overall hotel's plans and policies	3.622	1.192
Top management commitment and support		
Top managers participate in formulating HR plans and policies	3.840	1.055
HR issues are delegated to other organizational departments	2.556	1.390
HR budget is sufficient to achieve its plans and objectives	3.200	1.439
Top management is not committed to, supports, and provides all the facilitation to HR activities	2.444	1.340
Line managers' partnership		
Line managers facilitate the management of HR activities and provide coaching, monitoring and support	2.044	1.043
Cost effective evaluation		
Emphasis on cost effectiveness evaluation to assess the effectiveness of HRM	2.667	1.187
Organizational culture		
HRM objectives relating to the hotel's culture	2.288	1.140
Environmental scanning		
Policies and plans related to HRM are flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances	3.511	1.217

Table 3. Correlations between SHRM components and hotel –specific characteristics

	Size	Classification	Ownership
	Pearson (2-tailed) <i>r(p)</i>		T-Test F(<i>p</i>)
The hotel has a clearly defined strategy relating to human resource management	0.408 (0.005)	0.625 (0.000)	17.21 (0.000)
The hotel has formal (written) HRM plans and policies	0.482 (0.001)	0.750 (0.000)	31.00 (0.000)
HR managers participate in formulating the hotel's overall strategy	0.463 (0.001)	0.693 (0.000)	8.610 (0.005)
HR managers are consultants and participate in the hotel's board meeting	0.358 (0.016)	0.539 (0.000)	4.416 (0.041)
HR strategy, plans and policies are in harmony with the departments' plans and policies in the hotel.	0.463 (0.001)	0.693 (0.000)	0.651 (0.427)
HR plans and policies are integrated with and derived from the overall plans and policies of the hotel.	0.358 (0.016)	0.539 (0.000)	1.052 (0.315)
Top managers participate in formulating HR plans and policies	-0.127 (0.410)	0.054 (0.726)	2.442 (0.126)
HR issues are delegated to other organizational departments	-0.470 (0.001)	-0.266 (0.078)	0.002 (0.965)
HR budget is sufficient to achieve its plans and objectives	0.335 (0.025)	0.446 (0.002)	0.104 (0.748)
Top management is not committed to, supports, and provides all the facilitation of HR activities	-0.390 (0.008)	-0.380 (0.008)	3.381 (0.073)
Line managers facilitate management of HR activities and provide coaching, monitoring and support.	-0.297 (0.047)	0.513 (0.000)	3.720 (0.060)
Emphasis on cost effectiveness and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of HRM.	-0.395 (0.007)	-0.293 (0.050)	2.779 (0.103)
HR objectives relating to the hotel's culture	-0.599 (0.000)	-0.541 (0.000)	3.701 (0.068)
Policies and plans related to HR are flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances	0.378 (0.000)	0.448 (0.000)	3.701 (0.068)