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# Strategies for Retaining Employees in the Hospitality Industry

Melvia Edna Scott  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Melvia Edna Scott

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2015

Abstract

Strategies for Retaining Employees in the Hospitality Industry

by

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MBA, Nova Southeastern University, 2011

BS, Bethune-Cookman University, 2006

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2015

## Abstract

Employee retention is a critical issue for business leaders. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported over 4.5 million employee separations in 2014 because of resignations, layoffs, or terminations. Hospitality managers face some of the lowest employee retention rates of any industry, which leads to poor customer satisfaction and decreased profitability. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the perceptions of 3 hospitality managers from 3 different mid-sized hospitality organizations in Brevard County, Florida. The conceptual framework for this study was built upon motivation theory; existence, relatedness, and growth theory; and expectancy theory. The data were collected through document and artifact review, a reflective journal, and semistructured interviews. Member checking was completed to strengthen credibility and trustworthiness of the interpretation of the participants' responses. Four themes emerged from the data: the motivational outcome, leadership characteristics, most effective retention strategies, and the least effective strategies influencing employee retention. The findings from this study may educate inform hospitality managers on how to stabilize employment, improve retention, and increase customer satisfaction and profitability.

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## Dedication

This research is evidence that when my redeemer began a good work in me *he* carried on to completion. To my mother, Brenda Theresa Scott, who sacrificed so much in hopes that I would have a life that she could only dream. My journey would have been even harder to accomplish without your constant encouragement and unwavering belief in me. I love you with every inch of my heart. Words cannot express how blessed I am to have the support of so many family members, friends, colleagues, and church supporters, to cry, pray, and laugh at me. Each time I called on my support systems, no one hesitated to remind me that my focus was to remain goal-driven. Additionally, this is for those who started life at the bottom and continuously strive to reach the top through hard work and determination, despite what people think. You can make it; do not give up!

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Business leaders in the 2014 labor market placed emphasis on attracting and retaining employees that were being lost to competitors or other career opportunities (Ramlall, 2012; Singh, Dev, & Mandelbaum, 2014). Guilding, Lamminaki, and McManus (2014) argued that hospitality organizations experience higher than average levels of employee turnover. More leaders in these organizations are increasingly acknowledging just how costly it is to replace an employee rather than retain the employee (Guilding et al., 2014). The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies needed by hospitality managers to retain employees.

### **Background of the Problem**

Employee retention is a challenge that can affect the success of an industry (Guilding et al., 2014). Employee retention and turnover crises have been emerging in the 21st century for many businesses, including hospitality (Gursoy, Rahman, & Swanger, 2012). Retention in the hospitality industry is a continuing and ever-evolving effort to retain the best available labor talent (Han & Hyun, 2015; Karatepe, 2013) as hospitality managers face the challenge of managing a constantly changing workforce (Alexakis, 2011). Researchers noted that some managers have either not addressed the problem of employee retention or have attempted to address the problem with little success (Alexakis, 2011; Kucukusta, Denizci Guillet, & Lau, 2014). Robinson, Kralj, Solnet, Goh, and Callan (2014) concluded that employees will stay with an organization if given a combination of retention strategies that can make leaving seem less than advantageous.

### **Problem Statement**

Low employee retention in hospitality organizations results in the loss of thousands of dollars with the departure of their most valuable asset, human capital (Freedman & Kosová, 2014). The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) reported 4.5 million total employee separations in 2014 attributed to employee turnover for reasons such as quitting, layoffs, and discharges. The general business problem is the inability of some hospitality managers to retain employees at the workplace which results in a loss of customer satisfaction and profitability. The specific business problem was that some hospitality managers lack strategies to improve employee retention.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. The population consisted of experienced hospitality managers in Brevard County, Florida, who implemented strategies to improve employee retention. Three experienced hospitality managers with supervision and hiring responsibilities from mid-sized hospitality organizations participated. Hospitality managers were appropriate for this study because these managers were most suited to identify the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention with the consideration of real-life experiences. I also collected and analyzed documents and I used a reflective journal to methodologically triangulate the data. The implications for positive social change included possible changes to impact business practices by providing hospitality managers strategies needed for improving employee retention, thus improving the stability of and customers'

experiences with their organizations (Malik & Usman, 2011).

### **Nature of the Study**

The research method for this study was qualitative. An advantage of the qualitative method is the researcher studies participants in their lived environments (Eide & Showalter, 2012). Quantitative methods do not include a collection of detailed information on the lived experiences of research participants (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). A quantitative approach was not appropriate for this study because I was not seeking to determine a cause-and-effect relationship (Barratt, Choi, & Li, 2011). A mixed-methods approach consists of both qualitative and quantitative research designs, enabling a researcher to seek the information needed to solve a problem instead of identifying the problem's cause (Sparkes, 2014).

Multiple case studies are used to explore a phenomenon by comparing a target population's differences and similarities (Stake, 1995) and based on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2014) which was the intent of this study. Other qualitative designs considered for this study were phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative inquirers. A phenomenology study is a study of human experience from the view of those living the phenomenon (Robertson & Thompson, 2014), which was not the intent of this study. Ethnography inquirers study groups of individuals and their cultures (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012); based on the criteria for an ethnography study, I did not choose an ethnography approach. Narrative inquirers collect stories, group conversations, and documents as the primary sources of data to make meaning of what is happening in a phenomenon (Wells, 2011). The narrative inquirers did not meet the needs of this study.

### **Research Question**

The research question for this study, which I developed to contribute to the body of knowledge on employee retention, was as follows: What strategies do hospitality managers need to improve employee retention?

### **Interview Questions**

In this study, I focused on my interview questions to explore the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. The interviews questions I used to interview managers for this proposed study are as follows:

#### **Interview Questions**

1. What employee motivational factors and leadership characteristics do you use to retain employees in your hospitality organization?

Follow up question: What are some of the reasons these motivational factors and leadership characteristics apply to retaining employees in the hospitality organization?

2. What strategies have you used to retain employees in the hospitality organization?
3. Which of these strategies have you implemented to retain employees in the organization?

4. Which of these strategies helped to improve employee retention?

Follow up question: Why do these strategies help to improve employee retention?

5. Which of these strategies did not help to improve employee retention?

Follow up question: Why did these strategies not improve employee retention?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Maslow's motivation theory (1943), Alderfer's existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory (1969), and Vroom's expectancy theory (1964) are used in both academic and professional practice to predict employee motivation (Kessler, 2013). Researchers have offered that various conceptual frameworks for understanding employees' motivational needs (Kessler, 2013; Russ, 2011; Sebastian & Davison, 2011). A manager may inspire an employee's decision to retain employment within an organization depending on the leadership style they practice (Kessler, 2013; Russ, 2011; Sebastian & Davison, 2011). The use of these frameworks broadly conceptualizes the intersections between managers' perceptions of human nature and their approaches to motivating others in organizational settings (Russ, 2011). As a result, key constructs or propositions underlying the frameworks are the leadership styles used by the managers to retain employees (Kessler, 2013). In this study, I asked each hospitality manager to describe the strategies he or she has implemented to retain employees. As recommended for qualitative studies by Yin (2014), I used multiple sources of data to maximize the range of data needed to contribute to my understanding of the patterns and themes of the phenomenon. I examined the motivation needs theory; existence, relatedness, growth theory; and expectancy theory on strategies to improve employee retention. I tied each of the concepts in the study to strategies used to improve employee retention to develop a better understanding and analyze ongoing situational reality experiences (Proietti, 2012;



Sebastian & Davison, 2011; Yin, 2014). In the literature review, I included details about each of these theories that I used as the conceptual framework for this proposed study.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Employee retention.* Employee retention is the ability of an organization to retain its employees (Cardy & Lengnick-Hall, 2011).

*Employee turnover.* Employee turnover is a voluntary separation act initiated by an employer or employee after establishing employment for any length of time (Chalkiti, 2012).

*Epoché.* Epoché, or bracketing, is a technique used by a researcher to mitigate bias that he or she may have regarding phenomena they seek to research (Moustakas, 1994). In general, the researcher brackets out their experiences about the phenomenon prior to exploring the phenomenon as in an effort to identify any potential bias that he or she may have prior to observing the phenomenon. When the researcher has an awareness of potential biases, the researcher can set them aside to their view the phenomenon under study from a fresh perspective (Moustakas, 1994).

*Hospitality industry.* The hospitality industry is a business sector that provides services, such as food, drink, and lodging to an individual or group of people outside of a private home (Chon, Barrows, & Bosselman, 2013).

*Job satisfaction.* Job satisfaction is the manner and passion a worker expresses from internal and external drivers; it is how an individual feels toward his or her performance at a job (Ghorbanian, Bahadori, & Nejati, 2012).

*Leader.* A leader is an individual who leads, supports, and inspires others to

achieve goals established by an organization's direction (Owens & Hekman, 2012).

*Leadership style.* Leadership style is a method by which an organizer directs, mentors, supervises, and oversees appointed subordinates within an organization (Caruthers, 2011).

*Manager.* A manager is an individual who is responsible for directing, planning, and coordinating resources in support of attaining organizational goals (Gittel & Douglass, 2012).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

During the development of this study, certain critical self-reflections were established and recognized to set the boundaries of this study (Merriam, 2014). A researcher provides background data for establishing the context of a study and a detailed description of the phenomenon in question; researchers can transfer the context to future research settings (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The following is a summary of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations for this study.

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions in a study are underlying perspectives assumed to be probably true by the researcher; otherwise, the study may not progress (Foss & Hallerg, 2013; Merriam, 2014). The basis of this study included five assumptions. The first assumption was retention strategies continue to be important in hospitality organizations in Brevard County, Florida. The second assumption in the study was the use of multiple sources of data were the best approach for collecting data. I used semistructured interviews as well as gathered, analyzed, and triangulated other data, such as company employee retention

documents, to develop an answer to the research question that I proposed for this study. The third assumption was the population of hospitality managers in this study was appropriate for exploring common themes involving the employee retention strategies in the hospitality industry. The fourth assumption in this study was that a qualitative multiple case study approach was the best research design. Multiple case study designs are used to study a phenomenon in a natural setting, or determining what happened or why it happened (Yin, 2014). The fifth assumption was that the hospitality managers provided complete answers to my questions and provided me with the most current documents that I needed to complete the case study. Based on researchers' descriptions and past uses of qualitative methods and multiple case study designs, I assumed that a qualitative multiple case study was the best-suited research design for the study.

### **Limitations**

Leedy and Ormrod (2013) concluded that limitations in a study are potential weaknesses that are out of the researcher's control. The findings from this study reflected the perceptions of only the managers interviewed and not those of other managers on the organization leadership team in other departments within the organization. I limited the study population to the selected managers in hospitality organizations in the study area. In many cases, an organization's confidentiality requirements limited the quality and details of the responses that participants provided. In addition, the data for this study were collected from managers in a limited geographic area in a particular industry and may not represent the views and experiences of hospitality managers in other geographic locations.

## **Delimitations**

Delimitations of this study are characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study within a researcher's control (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2011). The study included five interview questions with follow-up probing questions that I presented to three study participants. The study participants were managers in their respective companies with a minimum of 5 years of experience in hospitality management. The study participants served in a role as a manager in a hospitality organization in Brevard County, Florida, possessed at minimum a bachelor's degree, and were at least 18 years of age with experience in implementing employee retention strategies. I did not interview subordinates for their opinions of the study participants' retention strategies. Likewise, I did not solicit any other employees of the organizations to share their opinions. The results of this study may not be transferable to managers and employees of other hospitality organizations within Brevard County, Florida or in other regions of the United States.

## **Significance of the Study**

An assessment of the values of this study is to help business leaders distinguish one potential critical focus in their business environment. Managers, stakeholders, and scholar-practitioners may find this study helpful to understand effective retention strategies. An analysis of the contribution to business practices and implication for social change could provide industry leaders with a foundation for developing and implementing employee retention strategies. It was my hope that this study offered a comprehensive overview of findings and discussions on the service hospitality industry

and hospitality leadership. Another contribution of studying this phenomenon, according to Leung, Law, van Hoof, and Buhalis (2014), is to provide an agenda for future research on retention strategies in service and hospitality.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

Employees make beneficial contributions to a business and increase the profitability of an organization (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Few companies remain competitive when having to spend more resource to develop human resources than on customer services (Daskin & Tezer, 2012). The findings from this study may contribute to improving business practice by providing information that may have a substantial effect on employee retention, as well as raise organizational leaders' awareness and understanding of employee retention strategies. Hospitality managers may be able to use the findings to explore the potential causes of employee turnover and implement strategies for improved retention. The results of this study may also benefit managers in other organizational leadership positions by providing strategies they can implement to improve employee retention.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Regardless of the industry, a high employee retention rate influences the culture of an organization (Ladelsky & Catană, 2013). Managers can attempt to foster greater loyalty among employees which can help organizations remain successful even in challenging economic times (Gursoy et al., 2012). The findings from this case study may be used to contribute to positive social change by providing information on employee retention strategies that could help stabilize employment and improve services to

customers in hospitality organizations. Understanding the strategies hospitality managers are practicing to retain employees is essential in ensuring that hospitality organizations gain a comprehension of the factors that influence retention so that they can control turnover in their organization (Ghapanchi & Aurum, 2011).

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

Employee retention is a leading concern in business (Gruman & Saks, 2011). By showing some of the factors that affect an employee's intentions to leave an organization, managers may address those factors to avoid unplanned turnover (Das, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. Waight and Madera (2011) linked employee retention to job satisfaction and the job environment, such as increased levels of responsibility and challenging tasks. Exploring retention strategies may enhance productivity and social responsibility as well as improve company morale, job satisfaction, and retention of an organization's employees (Khaliki, 2014).

The purpose of this literature review was to present a critical synthesis of historical and current research concerning the conceptual framework, the service and hospitality sector, employee motivations, leadership styles, employee retention strategies, and leadership. The Walden University Library and Google Scholar databases produced valuable information for the literature review. The research databases utilized included ERIC, ProQuest, Business Info Source, and SAGE Journals. The search words included *leadership, strategy, leadership skills, retention, job satisfaction, recruitment, organizational culture, turnover, leadership traits, practical results, and high-performing*

*employee*. The literature gathering process included the use of peer-reviewed journal articles, seminal books, and relevant governmental websites. The use of multiple sources ensured scholarship, rigor, and depth. Of the total of 156 unique sources referenced in the literature review, 148 are current, peer-reviewed research articles published from 2011 to 2015 (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Literature Review Source Content*

Literature Review Content	Total #	# Less than 5 years old at graduation date	% Total peer-reviewed less than 5 years old at graduation date
Peer-reviewed Journals	148	150	96.15%
Books	4	2	.01%
Non-peer reviewed Journals	2	0	0%
Older Articles	2	0	0%
Total	156	152	96.16%

To investigate common themes among researchers, the peer-reviewed articles included qualitative and quantitative studies. Researchers employ literature maps to outline a visual summary of the literature used to explore a topic (Rahmandoust et al., 2011). Through outlining general headings and subheadings, literature maps assist researchers to determine connections between subjects and highlight research gaps (Rahmandoust et al., 2011). I organized the literature using a concept map with six topic hierarchies, including the conceptual framework, the service and hospitality industry sector, employee motivations, the effects of leadership, current knowledge on employee

retention within the limitation of this phenomenon, and the need for employee retention strategies. I explored five of the topics in suborder themes to illuminate employee retention strategies further. Synthesis of the suborder themes then led to consideration of additional elements for building an employee-centered environment and different leadership styles. Throughout the literature review, the conceptual framework of: Maslow's (1943) motivation theory; Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory; and, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory are presented to justify and explain other researchers' perspectives on strategies hospitality managers need to retain employees.

### **Conceptual Framework**

I incorporated the theoretical framework of: Maslow's (1943) motivation theory (1943); Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory; and, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory as the study's conceptual framework. Alderfer's, Maslow's, and Vroom's early theoretical foundations emphasized employee retention through motivation, management support, and workplace fulfillment; factors that continue to affect hospitality industry employee retention worldwide (Ramlall, 2012). Prior motivational viewpoints (Alderfer, 1969; Maslow, 1943) were pertinent to a rigorous exploration of employee retention strategies. Latukha (2011) argued that understanding retention strategies are essential to retain employees in the workplace. In the following sections, I presented a conceptual framework synthesis for employee motivation, employee engagement, satisfying human needs, and leadership topics.

**Motivation theory.** Maslow (1943) theorized that people have basic needs for growth and development that must be satisfied. Maslow identified the individual needs as



(a) physiological, (b) safety, (c) social, (d) esteem, and (e) self-actualization. Maslow proposed an individual must attain lower needs, such as safety, before the higher needs like esteem, thereby leading to self-actualization. He identified an important limitation to the achievement of self-actualization that each human need must be addressed in a fixed hierarchy without variation. For example, an employee may work to fulfill needs more complex than the physiological and neglect to address that need area properly (Boyd, 2014). Blower and Mahajan (2013) found that neglecting the needs of internal and external stakeholders can prove fatal for the success of an organization.

The application of Maslow's (1943) motivational theory to the context of employee retention, according to Shuck and Herd (2012), was that a manager does not necessarily do the work of meeting an employee's needs; rather an employee is motivated by their lowest level of unsatisfied need. Consideration of Maslow's motivational theory provided a critical link between an employee's work motivation and a manager's continuous adaptation to employees' changing needs to keep their workforce motivated (Shuck & Herd, 2012). A complete understanding of the full need framework might underpin employee retention (Maslow, 1943; Shuck & Herd, 2012). An employee's external values and unmet needs could hinder the achievement of self-actualization within a work environment (Boyd, 2014). Fassin (2012) proclaimed that an individual's external values are affected by the actions of an organizational manager that lacks strategies to improve employee retention, social groups, and associations. Maslow (1943) found that people change to fulfill the individual need for personal growth. The unique motivation for self-actualization causes individuals to pursue need resolution (Maslow,

1943). For example, one employee may need job security while another seeks professional support to fulfill a need (Russ, 2011). There is no particular trigger or form that an employee need might take place in the workplace as personal needs vary (Maslow, 1943). Kellerman (2013) concluded geographic locations have been ignored when discussing Maslow's motivation theory because human needs, the demand for basic needs, and meeting those needs are not achieved thoroughly in the workplace. Researchers and business leaders implement or criticize Maslow's theory of motivation (Kellerman, 2013). For the purpose of exploring employee retention strategies, using Maslow's theory as a conceptual framework sufficed for an initial examination of the satisfaction of human needs.

**Existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory.** Alderfer (1969) concluded that there are three needs that dominant in the workplace: existence, relatedness, and growth. Alderfer's ERG theory included a limitation similar to Maslow's theory yet incorporated flexible movement between needs (Guillén, Ferrero, & Hoffman, 2014). Alderfer defined existence needs as physiological and safety needs, which an employer met by providing safe working conditions and earnings (Alderfer, 1969; Steidle, Gockel, & Werth, 2013). Relatedness needs are a person's actions to maintain meaningful interpersonal relationships, including those with workplace colleagues and managers (Alderfer, 1969; Steidle et al., 2013). Growth needs reflect a person's desire for self-fulfillment through finding opportunities to be productive and creative by working on meaningful tasks (Alderfer, 1969; Steidle et al., 2013). I used Alderfer's ERG theory as a conceptual framework to enhance my understanding of potential employee retention

strategies.

To benefit from an implementation of ERG theory (Alderfer, 1969) required that hospitality managers simultaneously recognize an employee's multiple needs of existence, relatedness, and growth (Russ, 2011). Managers that identified the various ERG needs that drive an employee understood an employee's behavior and worked towards motivating them (Alderfer, 1969; Russ, 2011). Alderfer (1969) proposed that if a manager concentrated only on one employee, another might regress due to frustration. Although a manager may provide work-related fulfillment of needs, if the employee's nonwork related needs are not met the employee could leave the organization (Steidle et al., 2013). Managers can aim for security and fulfilling their obligations to all employees in the workplace (Steidle et al., 2013).

Researchers have questioned whether ERG is more applicable to organizations that experience occasional employee retention challenges (Altman, Valenzi, & Hodgetts, 2013). Managers who focus exclusively on one need at a time will not effectively motivate the employee (Guillén et al., 2014). The application of Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory may be valid, however, organizational leaders who considered the use of the ERG reported very few everyday uses when seeking to retain multiple workers (Konrad, Moore, Doherty, Ng, & Breward, 2012). Researchers concluded that developing a range of strategies that address employees' various motivational drivers can foster a sustainable workforce (Altman et al., 2013; Kara, Uysal, Sirgy, & Lee, 2013). In response to Maslow's (1943) motivation theory and Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory, Vroom's expectancy theory was based on the premise that an individual's motivation can become

affected by an anticipated outcome of their actions (Vroom, 1964).

**Expectancy theory.** The relationship between an individual employee's motivation and work-related behavior attracted research attention (Jodlbauer, Selenko, Batinic, & Stiglbauer, 2012). Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory concentrated on the effort-performance relationship, the performance-reward relationship, and rewarded personal goal relationships. Vroom recommended focusing motivation efforts on understanding how and why people make decisions to satisfy maximum pleasure with minimum pain (Vroom, 1964). Vroom's expectancy theory stresses outcomes, unlike Maslow (1943) and Alderfer (1969) who focused on human needs (Kessler, 2013).

Vroom did not explain what motivated individuals, but rather how individuals made decisions to achieve a valued end they desired (Purvis, Zagenczyk, & McCray, 2015). Kessler (2013) found that organizational reward systems must be fair and just to be of value to employees. An employee's level of commitment or effort can change based on their perceived value of the rewards being offered (Kessler, 2013). If an employee perceived that his or her increased efforts did not increase the intrinsic or extrinsic reward, the employee was unlikely to value the reward (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). Russ (2011) noted that employees who did not perceive the reward as something of value could decide to leave the organization. Hospitality managers can design engaging, dynamic, and challenging jobs to ensure that employees feel rewarded for their performance (Downes & Choi, 2014; Purvis et al., 2015).

## **Service and Hospitality Industry Sector**

Researchers found it a challenge to define the two concentrations of service and hospitality (Kandampully, Keating, Kim, Mattila, & Solnet, 2014). Defining both of these terms was a challenge due to the lack of consensus (Kandampully et al., 2014). A detailed analysis of the discussion surrounding the evolving nature and definitions of service and hospitality was outside the scope of this research. A review of current debates indicated that a commonly accepted simple definition of hospitality and service does not exist (Kandampully et al., 2014; Symons, 2013). Researchers have provided the essential aspects to frame contributions and subsequent reviews (Kandampully et al., 2014; Magilo & Spohrer, 2013), including measurement of the service phenomena (Magilo & Spohrer, 2013; Prakash & Mohanty, 2013).

**Hospitality organizations.** Teng (2013) described a hospitality organization as one with a purpose to satisfy a full range of needs such as food, beverages, and accommodations. The hospitality industry involves frequent guest–host interactions and hospitality organizations cater to the needs of diverse customer groups (Teng, 2013). Symons (2013) considered that a possible definition of hospitality as a custom, obligation, pleasure, and performance industry. Darling (2014) noted that the term hospitality is simultaneously a vague and massive concept. Existing literature does yet encompass the distinctions of host and guest relationships found in an interactional setting (Kirillova, Gilmetdinova, & Lehto, 2014). Hospitality is an underlying aspect of organizations and customers interacting in a service context (Thirkettle & Korstanje, 2013). Kirillova et al. (2014) attributed that the definition challenges to perspective, with

hospitality as a product, a process, experience, or all three.

Prior scholars have already described the significance and implications of hospitality employee retention (Banhwa, Chipunza, & Chamisa, 2014; Cascio, 2014). Teng (2013) noted that little research focused on essential elements of leadership roles in hospitality management to enhance management professionals' competency and benefit the industry by teaching retention skills. Nwosu (2014) found that a robust approach to credentialing and training the future hospitality workforce would support organizational leaders to retain a competent service workforce. Hospitality managers can gain an understanding of the efforts of other organization leaders who have implemented effective retention strategies, which may result in higher employee retention and lower turnover in the hospitality workforce.

**Defining service in the hospitality industry.** The definition of service is constantly changing because customer values are impacted by competitive shifts (Kandampully et al., 2014). For example, services rendered in a hospitality organization might encompass satisfaction linked to a sale of tangible goods (Kandampully et al., 2014). King, So, and Grace (2013) noted that a service is difficult to define and capture. Services offered by an organization are as different from each other as products they offer; the definition of service is constrained and dependent on who is portraying the service and the purpose (King et al., 2013). Most scholars consider services as economic activities offered by one party to another in exchange for money, time, and/or effort (Kandampully et al., 2014; King et al., 2013). Managers play a key role in the service hospitality industry (Arendt, Paez, & Strohbehn, 2013). Managers influence or establish

policies, standards, rewards, punishments, employee training, and provide the resources needed to follow satisfactory service practices (Arendt et al., 2013). Retaining employees in the hospitality industry can present a challenge for many business leaders without effective strategies to retain skilled workers (Mohlala, Goldman, & Goosen, 2012; Vijayakumar, 2012).

**Managing priorities in the service sector.** The growing importance of the service sector of the economy has stimulated interest in understanding how to design hospitality organizations for optimal performance (Elliot, 2011). The nature of the service sector is derived from an organizational leader's need to coordinate work that increases organizational proficiency and employee retention (Oreg & Berson, 2014). The potential costs of replacing and retraining skilled workers to meet the demands of the growing hospitality market drive the service sector (Oreg & Berson, 2014; Strom, Sears, & Kelly, 2014). As the hospitality service industry strives to survive under the present challenging economic conditions, Vijayakumar (2012) suggested that employers foster atmospheres that pay close attention to the cost of doing business while implementing policies and practices that address each employee's needs. Ruizalba, Bermúdez-González, Rodríguez-Molina, and Blanca (2014) defined hospitality jobs as service delivery jobs, which include jobs in hotels, resorts, restaurants, and other food services. Hospitality businesses thrive when a definite connection arises from positive interactions between individual employees and the guests (Ruizalba et al., 2014). The hospitality industry is comprised of both production and service aspects (Darling, 2014). An organization's goal is to exceed the customer's expectations during the interexchange of service (Darling, 2014).

A manager's efforts to create a productive workplace could play a substantial role in helping to achieve an organization's financial goals (Daniels, Mackovjak, Audia, & Richards, 2013). Managers have the responsibility of working within the human resources guidelines to ensure that retention strategies align with business goals. Human resource (HR) planning is focused on attracting and retaining highly skilled staff, which benefits hospitality organizations (Saad, 2013). Managers of services in any category, whether retail, factory, or hospitality, share similar retention challenges with a highly qualified workforce (Daniels et al., 2013). Managers of labor-intensive services should concentrate on performance goals and personnel matters (Daniels et al., 2013). Saad (2013) determined that organizational leaders who consider employees as a valuable asset will manage human capital by using positive HR practices and managerial styles. From a social change perspective, HR practices and managerial styles are valuable to organization leaders because employees provide support for business operations in their efforts to provide quality services and products. Managers who addressed the challenge of unmanaged employee turnover moved organizations toward a reliable workforce (Daniels et al., 2013). Saad (2013) concluded that a workplace filled with valuable employees could add value through increased competitive advantage (Saad, 2013). Saad found that competitive advantages can include environmental factors relevant to the satisfaction or to the ability to retain a workforce might not be within the control of the manager.

Environmental forces may serve as a reward for an acceptable level of performance (Kim, 2014). The hospitality environment is a market where competitive



demands force managers to find and retain frontline employees capable of delivering quality customer services (Karatepe, 2013). Kim (2014) noted that excessive turnover in the tourism and hospitality industry appears to cause dissatisfaction to thousands of people intermittently; the impact is underrated in contemporary financial systems. The longer employees stay with hospitality organizations, the more loyal they can become, which may help an organization's sustainability (Hofhuis, Van der Zee, & Otten, 2014). Managers can inspire their employees to stay as long as they can in their organizations (Andert, Platt, & Alexakis, 2011). Reducing the number of employees who leave an organization is a top priority for leaders (Harris, Li, & Kirkman, 2014). Businesses across the service industry spectrum reported employee retention as both problematic and costly (Harris et al., 2014; Hofhuis et al., 2014). The reason an employee decides to leave an organization varies (Harris et al. 2014). One researcher perceived factors include competitive compensation packages, a deficiency of trust and openness, weak leadership, and growth opportunities (El-Ramly, 2012). Leadership styles are integral to the retention of employees (Harris et al., 2014; Hofhuis et al., 2014) and hospitality organizations need retention strategies in place to ensure better the retention of employees within the hospitality industry.

### **Employee Motivations**

Managers have the responsibility to implement recruitment, compensation, and performance management systems to attract, motivate, and retain the right people for their organization (Smothers, 2011). The high costs of training new employees, combined with a decline in service quality, add to hospitality managers' concerns about employee

turnover and retention (Andert et al., 2011). Employee turnover and retention adversely affect many aspects of managers' work including costs, ensuring service quality, and maintaining the productive morale of remaining employees (Chauhan, Goel, & Arora, 2014). An examination of what motivates individuals within organizations can enhance understanding of how to retain employees (Andert et al., 2011).

**Understanding an employee needs.** Maslow (1943) stated that people have a variety of driving forces that motivate them, and no two individuals have the same forces driving them at a given time (Kessler, 2013). The driving forces stem from physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs (Gouviea, Milfont, & Guerra, 2014). Maslow (1943) concluded that needs are satisfied in a hierarchy flow; once the first level or lower order need is met, a person gradually moves to satisfying the next need.-For example, employees can meet their basic physiological needs, such as food and shelter, before moving on to meet the need for safety (Maslow, 1943). The desire to satisfy physiological needs increases as obligations outside of work grow (Gouviea et al., 2014). Developing an understanding of what an employee needs can empower managers to develop effective retention strategies (Gouviea et al., 2014). Managers that develop employee retention strategies could meet the needs of employees and improve the odds of retaining them (Gouviea et al., 2014).

**Employee's need for belonging to a group.** Zameer, Ali, Nisar, and Amir (2014) justified that the development of workplace groups supports an employee need to feel they are a part of a group setting in an organization. Groups in the work environment consist of employees who interact with one another (Fitzsimmons & Stamper, 2014). The

interaction occurs in a manner in which the behavior or performance of the group influence the behavior performance of the other members (Shevellar, Sherwin, & Barringham, 2014). Managers who form workplace groups can use those groups to motivate employees to work harder to reach an organizational goal (Fitzsimmons & Stamper, 2014; Zameer et al., 2014). Employees are attracted to groups because of the potential to satisfy needs (Shevellar et al., 2014; Zameer et al., 2014). The physical proximity and attraction, and the appeal of being a part of the achievement of group goals and activities could fill a need for some employees (Zameer et al., 2014). Workplace stressors related to groups include actions, situations, and events in which particular demands are placed on people (Shevellar et al., 2014; Zameer et al., 2014).

**Employee growth needs.** Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory of motivation concerned existence, relatedness, and growth elements that are similar to employees' needs (de Haan et al., 2014; Kessler, 2013). Maslow (1943) proposed that unfulfilled needs at one level are critical, and people will not abandon a need until the need is adequately satisfied. In addition to the satisfaction of Maslow's need hierarchy through the progression, ERG theory is a frustration-regression process that plays an adverse role in motivating workers (Alderfer, 1969). If the employees continuously experience frustrated attempts to satisfy growth needs, relatedness needs reemerge as a motivating force, resulting in individuals redirecting efforts toward exploring new ways to satisfy lower-order needs (Alderfer, 1969). People are motivated to engage in behaviors that satisfy one of the three sets of needs (Alderfer, 1969). Alderfer provided an interesting suggestion for managers concerning employees' higher order needs. If employees' higher-order

needs, such as growth, are blocked by company policies or lack of sufficient resources, changes are needed in the organization (de Haan et al., 2014). In this instance, managers could redirect employees' efforts toward relatedness or existence needs (de Haan et al., 2014; Kessler, 2013).

**Addressing an employee's need deficiencies.** McConnell (2011) stated that managers could suggest strategies that an organization can implement to address employee need deficiencies. Organizational leaders have the capability to provide employee satisfaction through work; satisfied employees become increasingly aware of their work environment (McConnell, 2011). McConnell (2011) argued that attempting to address deficiencies had a greater impact on initiating and directing behavior than focusing on lower-level needs that may be closer to fulfillment. Alderfer (1969) agreed that employees sought the feeling of security within their work environment through factors such as belonging to the group. After a fulfillment of the need for security, employees will seek esteem, the last stage of self-actualization (Alderfer, 1969). With self-actualization, employees are motivated to do their best work, thereby also meeting their psychological and physical needs (Gouveia et al., 2014; Kessler, 2013). An employee who realizes a sense of belonging achieves fulfillment from the success of the company (Kessler, 2013).

**Managing expectations.** Lunenburg (2011) stated that managers use Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation to develop motivation strategies for employees. Vroom's theory is an explanation of the steps people take in pursuing and attaining an outcome (Vroom, 1964). Additionally, Lunenburg (2011) noted that an employee might

perform better due to anticipated consequences of actions. If a manager is going to use a reward system to motivate employees, the perceived reward can be greater than the effort exerted (Cartwright & Cooper, 2014). Managers can understand many aspects of employees' personality traits to determine what types of benefits motivate the required work effort (Russ, 2011). Based on Vroom's expectancy theory, employees have a variety of expectations and managers must ensure that workers feel confident performing to the organization's standard (Russ, 2011). To elicit results and dedication from employees, managers can understand and strive to meet individuals' expectations (Downes & Choi, 2014).

Maslow's (1943) motivation theory, Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory, and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory clarified that motivations vary based on the environmental and individual psychological needs. When employees have a high need for job security, the need can result in a lower turnover rate (Alderfer, 1969). For this reason, organizational managers who can recognize what motivates employees may reduce absenteeism and turnover, which in turn positively affects overall productivity results (Bareket-Bojmel, Hochman, & Ariely, 2014). Ultimately, managers could use the theoretical frameworks to increase staff workplace retention, thereby improving individual, group, and organizational effectiveness (Sebastian & Davison, 2011). When a manager understands and addresses employee expectations and motives, managers position themselves to serve their internal customers better, the employees (Kessler, 2013; Vroom, 1964).

## **Leadership**

From the creation of the first organized business, leadership has been a vital part of the success and failure of an organization (Hargis, Watt, & Piotrowski, 2011). Graybill (2014) found that, despite the importance of the concept of leadership, there is no clear and consistent definition. Leadership, as defined by Dhawan and Zubin (2011), is the ability to lead using various strategies to accomplish organizational goals collectively. Larsson and Eid (2012) claimed that an effective leader can envision a solution for problems while leading subordinates to follow designed strategies and run the organization smoothly.

**Leadership behavior.** One of the fundamental signs of quality leaders is the ability and skill to motivate followers to accomplish great things (Grant, 2012). Leaders foster motivation by engaging in inspirational behaviors such as conveying a compelling vision, emphasizing collective identities, expressing confidence and optimism, and referencing core values and ideals (Grant, 2012). Per Grant (2012), leader behaviors include accomplishing tasks and expending effort to maintain others who are completing assigned tasks. Likert (1947) claimed that a manager's effectiveness is measurable by productivity, job satisfaction, turnover, cost, and employee motivation. Measurements of the effectiveness of leaders are behaviors and the ability to retain a satisfied workforce of followers (Likert, 1947).

Certain qualities of leadership behavior are learned and adjusted through training programs aimed at improving managers' leadership skills; investments in leadership development is considered safe (Wu, Tse, Fu, Kwan, & Liu, 2013). Managers behave as

gatekeepers by increasing trust, empowering action, and respecting employees (Eversole, Venneberg, & Crowder, 2012). Managers who engage themselves frequently in two-way communication with employees can provide feedback that can motivate an employees' work performance (Eversole et al., 2012). Specifically, acknowledging an employee's life outside work displays supportive behavior and helps to ensure tools and resources are applied effectively to maintain a satisfied workforce of followers (Eversole et al., 2012). Hon and Chan (2013) agreed that, finding that empowering behaviors are useful in facilitating an employee's self-concordance and creative efficacy when tasks are interdependent. Lower than average employee turnover rates in an organization links to an appreciation of the leadership styles that create the atmosphere of satisfied employees (Hon & Chan, 2013).

The majority of researchers who have studied employee retention focused their research efforts on employees being satisfied with their jobs with a particular focus on the assignment of responsibilities in an effective and efficient way (Nunkoo, Gursoy, & Rammkisson, 2013). Workers seek employment where they receive performance praises (Nunkoo et al., 2013). Specifically, trust between an employee and a manager, and a leadership style that encourages the development of skills among employees encourages employee job satisfaction (McCole, Jacobs, Lindley, & McAvory, 2012). Certain types of leadership styles have the potential to increase employee retention (McCole et al., 2012). A significant influence on employee retention is the direction that employees receive from their managers (Maier, 2011). Conversely, researchers know little about the specific satisfaction levels of employees and preventive measures managers use to decrease the

employee turnover rate (McCole et al., 2012).

**Leadership styles.** Leaders who demonstrate a particular leadership style create the corporate cultures that influence organization performance (Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013). Leaders espouse different leadership styles due to a combination of group values, competencies, skills, and personal styles. Liu, Cai, Li, Shi, and Yongqing (2013) narrated that leadership styles affect employees' self-perception within an organization. Managers continuously work toward developing programs and encouraging behaviors that can contribute to the professional abilities and advancement of employees (Sawa & Swift, 2013). Managers can develop the leadership capability daily to reinforce the mission and goals of the organization with employees (Sawa & Swift, 2013). Contract and exchange relationships between a subordinate and a manager are built through the leader-follower dyad (Liu et al., 2013). A high-quality leader-follower exchange allows for mutual expectation and influence, which can reduce an employee's intention to leave (Liu et al., 2013). In general, Sawa and Swift (2013) determined that the leaders in a company could play a substantial role in setting the tone and culture within an organization. The dominant organizational leadership styles and preferences determine the type of work, business practices, and opportunities accessible to employees (Sawa & Swift, 2013). A manager's implementation of a leadership style could affect the overall tone and attitude of the work environment and the method of executing the vision for the business (Sawa & Swift, 2013).

Dinh et al. (2014) identified that various leadership styles, which include authentic, autocratic, bureaucratic, charismatic, laissez-faire, servant, transactional, and



transformational. When managers integrate any of the leadership practices, employees may exhibit more satisfaction, improved efficiency, and deeper organizational commitment (Dinh et al., 2014). When a manager uses one or more of the leadership styles, it could have a positive effect on their organization (Farahani, Taghadosi, & Behboudi, 2011).

*Authentic style.* Researchers have found that the leader with an authentic leadership style has strong similarities with transformational, charismatic, and servant style leaders (Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Wong & Laschinger, 2013). The use of an authentic leadership model is increasing in legitimacy (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Wong and Laschinger (2013) noted that managers that emphasized transparency, balanced processing, self-awareness, and high ethical standards increased employee job satisfaction and performance. Leaders with a keen sense of behavior awareness are authentic leaders (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Authenticity includes applied ethics, strict morals, and a high degree of awareness (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Seeking the same qualities in others, authentic managers help employees access opportunities to learn and grow by providing necessary support and resources (Wong & Laschinger, 2013). Specifically, authentic managers are more likely to create positive and empowering work environments (Wong & Laschinger, 2013). Authentic leaders are intensely aware of their environment, and demonstrate determination, poise, and optimism (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Conversely, authentic leaders set their personal values and beliefs over another individual, which cause potential biases and followers have a difficult time following their leadership (Ford & Harding, 2011).

***Autocratic style.*** A leader that takes total control and makes all of the decisions is using an autocratic style (Stacher, 2011). Autocratic leadership styles are common in military regimes and nondemocratic countries (Stacher, 2011). The autocratic leader demonstrates a controlling attitude towards the team and makes decisions without member input or agreement (Monzani, Ripoll, & Silla, 2014). Monzani et al. (2014) argued that this type of leader provides strong task direction; however, an autocratic leader is not concerned with the feelings, thoughts, or satisfaction of subordinates (Schoel, Bluemke, Mueller, & Stahlberg, 2011). Autocratic leadership hallmarks include control of the flow of information and maintaining a tight hold on communication and authority (Schoel et al., 2011). Further, the autocratic leader will delegate very little to subordinates (Monzani et al., 2014).

***Bureaucratic style.*** The bureaucratic leadership style is comparable to the autocratic leadership style (Green & Roberts, 2012). Green and Roberts (2012) argued that bureaucratic leaders acquire authority through control and detail orientation. In a bureaucratic administration, there is an assembly of leaders in power (Singh, 2013). The autocratic leader, however, tends to focus on having power and influence over an individual (Stacher, 2011). Elena (2012) found that leaders at government organizations espouse a bureaucratic leadership style. A bureaucratic leader can sometimes demand stringent compliance to a set of rigid rules and regulations as determined by the governing body (Elena, 2012; Green & Roberts, 2012), making the style quickly adaptable to fit a modern organization in a fixed work environment.

Bureaucratic leadership is management driven, where the current system and

procedure maintenance are paramount to success (Elena, 2012). Bureaucratic leaders eliminate creativity and do not welcome diverse ideas of others (Stacher, 2011). The bureaucratic leader discourages the outside input to the point of alienating others (Stacher, 2011). The bureaucratic leader secures power in the strict enforcement of detail and accountability; leaders manage resources and delegate only particular assignments (Stacher, 2011). The bureaucratic concept can be beneficial for organizations seeking to emphasize regularity, reliability, and efficiency (Milosevic & Bass, 2014). Employees welcome organizational leaders that create fixed division of tasks, hierarchical supervision, and detailed rules and regulations with a high need for regularity and order (Milosevic & Bass, 2014). Effective bureaucratic managers encourage routine, detail, accountability, control layers, and rule through information control (Green & Roberts, 2012).

***Charismatic style.*** Charismatic leaders view others as valuable assets to an organization (Hayibor, Agle, Sears, Sonnenfeld, & Ward, 2011). Charismatic leaders offer encouragement and demonstrate the ability to motivate followers (Dionne et al., 2012). They have high emotional intelligence and know what to say to motivate subordinates to achieve preferred results (Wilderom, Van den Berg, & Wiersma, 2012). The charismatic leader possesses vision, enthusiasm, and confidence, with the ability to infuse colleagues with these qualities (Dionne et al., 2012). Yammarino and Dansereau (2011) described that charismatic leaders as being able to use their charisma to gain power and influence, yet may take risks. A comparison of transformational, servant, and spiritual leadership styles could enable researchers to contrast relative honesty, trust, and

optimism behaviors (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2011). For example, Murphy and Johnson (2011) found that charismatic leaders claim to be authentic but use the power primarily to benefit themselves instead of subordinates.

***Laissez-faire style.*** A laissez-faire leader allows subordinates to have total control over their work tasks (Salman, Riaz, Saifullah, & Rashid, 2011). This style of leadership exercises a relaxed approach to leading (Salman et al., 2011). The laissez-faire leaders leave the decision-making process up to others and are absent from their leadership role (Deriu, 2012; Westerlaken & Woods, 2013). Mehmood and Arif (2011) revealed that the laissez-faire leader does not desire the role and the responsibility of being a leader. Raja (2012) concluded that his relaxed approach does not display proper leadership (Mahseredjian, Karkoulian, & Messarra, 2011).

***Servant style.*** The servant leader demonstrates a helping behavior and ensures that individuals accomplish professional and personal goals (Sun, 2013). A servant leader desires to meet the needs of followers rather than lead them (Gillet, Cartwright, & Van Vugt, 2011). Servant leadership differs from other styles of leading and is related to transformational leadership (Sun, 2013). Hernandez, Everly, Avolio, and Johnson (2011) noted that the servant leadership style extends beyond the transformational style because the motives of a servant leader and subordinates link (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). Hunter et al. (2013) explained that servant leaders are capable of creating an organizational service climate through role modeling and social exchange. Servant leaders focus on the needs of followers through an interactive social exchange relationship, sharing leadership responsibilities, and mutual influence (Rai & Prakash, 2014). Servant leaders prioritize

employees' development and individual growth (Poksinska, Swartling, & Drotz, 2013; Rai & Prakash, 2014). Servant leaders detach themselves from employees to explore new opportunities, resolve problems, and formulate organizational goals (Rai & Prakash, 2014). Servant leaders are known for their often separation from employees to focus on the overall vision and to provide employees necessary directives to meet a new vision (Poksinska et al., 2013). Research conducted by Shekari and Nikooparvar (2011) noted that some employees might not respond to this leadership style. Servant leaders who cater to an employee's need for extreme manners lessen the employee's perception of them as an authoritative figure (Shekari & Nikooparvar, 2011).

***Transformational style.*** The transformational leader motivates individuals to perform tasks in a manner that exceeds the status quo. This style of leadership has received a great deal of attention in the literature (Farahani et al., 2011). In 1985, the transformational style became the preferred leadership approach in the United States (Darden, 2011). A transformational leader encourages employees to exceed expectations (Chen, Hwang, & Liu, 2012) and promotes radical change (Ishikawa, 2012). Credited for producing a highly effective change in organizations, transformational leaders typically have a positive effect on employees (Raja, 2012; Yang, 2012). Specifically, this leadership style is the preferred style when exceptional employee performance the goal (Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, & Nwankwere, 2011). Transformational leaders can increase employee satisfaction and fulfillment scores (Abeysekera & Jayakody, 2011). Researchers found that employees working for transformational leaders had increased commitment to their jobs and their employer (Den Hartog & Belschak,

2012; Yang, 2012). Transformational leaders permeate work with meaning, stimulate followers intellectually, and inspire others to work against self-interests (Abeysekera & Jayakody, 2011). When faced with a challenging context, transformational leaders may have an impact on employee retention (Raja, 2012). The use of open communication allows transformational leaders to motivate employees through an ambitious vision, high expectations, risk taking, and setting standards of performance (Abeysekera & Jayakody, 2011). Den et al. (2012) concluded that the relationship between transformational leaders and their employees is stronger if the employees or followers are aware that they possess all skills and knowledge to accomplish a task. Transformational leaders have the ability to link job success and career satisfaction (Den et al., 2012). The transformational leader is self-confident and has a strong value system, but Hernandez et al. (2011) noted that transformational leaders might exhibit behaviors that are both untrustworthy and inauthentic. The potential limitation of transformational leaders' authenticity necessitates a distinction between transformational and charismatic leadership styles to identify negative behaviors of each leadership style (Murphy & Johnson, 2011).

***Transactional style.*** The transactional leader uses an exchange process by which the follower receives a reward for performing a certain task or job (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013). Transactional leadership includes a reciprocal exchange in a mutual trade process (Lambright & Quinn, 2011). Leaders who implemented this style utilized reward and corrective action to control a subordinate's behaviors (Groves & LaRocca, 2011). The transactional leader focuses on doing things correctly versus doing the correct thing (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2011). Researchers have determined that

transactional leaders place too much emphasis on superficial processes rather than on substantial matters within the organization (Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Yammarino & Dansereau, 2011). Transactional leaders approach leadership through monitoring and controlling methods where rationality and economic means are enticements (Zhu, Riggio, Avolio, & Sosik, 2011).

### **Employee Retention Strategies**

Managers that ensure employees feel valued and supported can retain employees and serve as an organizational stabilizing influence during change (Shahid & Azhar, 2013). High turnover rates can be an indication of managers' challenges in retaining workers (Shahid & Azhar, 2013). Retention strategies have become an integral part of an organization's business strategy (Ghosh, Satyawadi, Joshi, & Shadman, 2012). By having a better understanding of the reasons that employees leave or want to leave an organization, effective retention strategies could reduce turnover (Cohen, 2013).

Managers increasingly work in an unpredictable economic environment (Shahid & Azhar, 2013). Employee knowledge is one of the most important sources of organizational competitive advantages (Schmitt, Borzillo, & Probst, 2011). Reitz, Stewart, and Bruce (2011) explained that job market competition and the need for employee job embeddedness, have risen because of the lack of adequate salary. A perceived adequate salary does not ensure an employee will remain with an organization (Reitz, 2014). Job market competition may be a critical factor in an employee's decision to quit a current job (Reitz et al., 2011). In the hospitality industry, retention strategies are critical because many of the employees' job skills are transferable to competitive

organizations (Strom et al., 2014).

Managers are not alone in their quests for efficient organizational performance. In most cases, employees have a stake in the performance of the organization (Kochanowski, 2011). When employees experience problems or observe opportunities for improvement, they engage in an improvement-oriented voice, which results in speaking up or exiting the group (McClellan, Burris, & Detert, 2013). Organizational performance depends on managers having more than a passing knowledge of the determinants of employee performance (Schmitt et al., 2011). Routine assessments of personal effectiveness through performance evaluation to determine who can receive promotions, raises, and other group rewards are favorable approaches to retaining employees (Kochanowski, 2011).

Organizational leaders must create an organizational environment that prompts employees to commit to the company by implementing effective employee retention strategies (Strom et al., 2014). In the phenomenon under study, I explored what strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. Following is a discussion of eight literature subthemes that pertain to employee retention strategies, including (a) creating an employee-centered environment, (b) equating job performance to job outcomes, (c) developing a positive relationship exchange, (d) making the job more satisfactory, (e) compensation, (f) coaching opportunities, and (g) developing retention strategies.

**Creating an employee centered work environment.** Gilbreath (2012) noted that managers have the greatest impact, control, and influence on the functionality of a



workplace. Regardless of leadership style, managers have an impact on creating the culture of an organization (Gilbreath, 2012). When organizational leaders modify the organizational culture to suit the needs of employees, workers tend to remain with the company longer (Eversole et al., 2012). Employee discontent is dangerous to ignore because it may lead to a decreased chance of a manager retaining an employee (Eversole et al., 2012). Managers are responsible for creating the environment and incentives that motivate employees to achieve satisfactory results and realize the overall company goals and objectives (Braun, Avital, & Martz, 2012). Creating an organizational culture responsive to employees' nonworking needs could help to attract and retain talented workers across generations (Eversole et al., 2012). Managers seek to create a consistent workplace through knowledge and skills (Gilbreath, 2012). In the absence of healthy work environments, employees are prone to dysfunction and low productivity, which hinder overall organizational effectiveness (O'Halloran, 2011).

*Valuing employees.* Employees are critical to a business's success (Park & Levy, 2014). The hospitality industry is a labor intensive and customer focused service industry (Park & Levy, 2014). Employee turnover rates negatively influence productivity and decreases consumer satisfaction. Freedman and Kosová (2014) claimed that the cost of losing a hospitality employee included the loss of productivity measures and the time involved to learn the necessary skills to replace that employee.

Managers' classification of what makes an employee valuable is the job specific performance context the employee exhibits in the workplace (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & González-Cruz, 2013). Some organizational leaders have precise definitions of high

performing employees that are influenced by industry or occupational fields (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). Researchers have noted a manager could identify a valued employee via the individual level of productivity (Karatepe, 2013). An employee's value can be measured in relation to a peer using job-related behaviors and performance outcomes (Kooij et al., 2013; Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2013).

***Knowledge management.*** Employees hold valuable, organizational specific knowledge, according to Wang, Noe, and Wand (2014), including ideas, facts, expertise, and judgments relevant to individual, team, and organizational performance. Wang et al. (2014) determined that an employee's knowledge could enhance their performance and potentially result in higher levels of compensation. Chong and Besharati (2014) noted that employee knowledge could leverage into a competitive advantage through knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing ensures an employee's valuable knowledge is transferred within a hospitality organization to equip workers to meet customer demands (Chong & Besharati, 2014).

Chong and Besharatri (2014) asserted that employees' rate of retention in the hospitality industry is low due to two common causes, which are low satisfaction and the quality of leadership. Hence, it is important for hospitality leaders to motivate employees to share knowledge to keep knowledge within the company (Chong & Besharatri, 2014). Encouraging a company culture, which includes sharing knowledge sharing standards, could help mitigate the negative impact of employee departures (Chong & Besharatri, 2014).

Organizations may not remain competitive if they fail to attract and retain talented

workers (Eversole et al., 2012). Organizational leaders who reported the use of retention strategies found employees to be an esteemed source of competitive advantage (Schmitt et al., 2011). Organizational leaders that can hire and retain the best workforce are proactive in reducing the unmanaged employee turnover rate (Cohen, 2013).

Employee retention strategies can take into account a company's effort, cost, and time (Cohen, 2013; Schmitt et al., 2011). Temporary costs for an experienced employee can rise to double the annual salary of a permanent employee (Capelli & Keller, 2014). Replacement costs are increasing in Florida where an aging workforce and sinking birthrates mean reduced availability of qualified workers (Frey, Bayon, & Totzek, 2013). Managers who experience low employee turnover contribute to business efficiency (Frey et al., 2013). Organizations benefit when low performers quit (Wang, Yang, & Wang, 2012). Thus, in addressing issues of turnover, managers can focus on whether high or low performers leave the organization more frequently (Wang et al., 2012). Low retention rates can be just as unhealthy for an organization because of the potential to cause stifling opportunities for internal promotions and prevent new people from joining the organization (Wang et al., 2012). Based on this research, hospitality managers could change the employee retention rate within their business organizations. In addition, using information from a small sample of managers may provide evidence that some managers are gaining an edge on employee retention, strengthening the need for further research to promote employee strategies for success in hospitality organizations.

***Human capital.*** Employees control the effort and commitment they apply toward a company's objectives (Brymer, Molloy, & Gilbert, 2013). In response to the retention

challenge, leaders consider effective methods to put employees' skill levels and abilities to productive use (Brymer et al., 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012). Employee retention is vital because organizational results depend on a solid base of human capital (Frey et al., 2013). Researchers declare there is no perfect method for retaining employees (Boone et al., 2013; Frey et al., 2013). To retain high performing employees, leaders can grant more extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to higher performers (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). Boone et al. (2013) asserted that a lack of self-confidence and low perception of rewards results in the majority of employees choosing to exit the company, rather than voicing discontent. The research on enhancing employee retention using extrinsic and intrinsic rewards and the relative the impact of an employee's confidence or self-esteem remains inconclusive (Boone et al., 2013).

**Equating job performance to job outcomes.** Greater job performance could equate to improved job outcomes (Ryu & Lee, 2013). Managerial performance is measured based on the return on assets, return on equity, net growth rate, and return on sales (Ho, 2011). Organizational performance is evaluated using efficiency and effectiveness measures (Ho, 2011). Organizational leaders that focus solely on company performances lead to some employees feeling undervalued (Ryu & Lee, 2013). When employees are satisfied with their jobs, employers retain employees in higher numbers (O'Halloran, 2011). It is a critical role of managers to increase organizational performance by managing the turnover retention equilibrium (Ryu & Lee, 2013). Ryu and Lee (2013) found evidence that leadership can affect employee performance and retention. Job performance relationships and turnover management have important

implications in a business context in the area of employee retention (Ryu & Lee, 2013).

**Creating positive relationship exchanges in the workplace.** Managers who understand and are comfortable with quality professional relationships can design effective and motivational retention strategies (Biron & Boon, 2012). In the social context of the manager to employee exchange relationships, the nature of the exchange is absent from the discussion of how performance may relate to turnover (Biron & Boon, 2012). Employees that are satisfied with the quality of their relationships with managers also become satisfied with their overall job experience (Venkataramni, Labianca, & Grosser, 2013).

Employee retention intentions vary based on aspects of the social exchange context, namely manager-subordinate exchanges (MSX) (Biron & Boon, 2012). Biron and Boon (2012) failed to demonstrate that a strong relationship between peer relations and turnover in their literature review on employee turnover. In a quality MSX relationship, the manager offers the employee rewards (Biron & Boon, 2012). For example, the manager could provide desirable responsibilities, increased responsibility, information sharing, career development opportunities, tangible rewards, and benefits in exchange for a substantial commitment, loyalty, and trust (Biron & Boon, 2012). Conversely, the absence of MSX is marked by a lack of respect and trust (Biron & Boon, 2012). Under these conditions, managers strictly can enforce duties while subordinates demonstrate little enthusiasm for high performance (Li & Liao, 2014; Vidyarthi, Erdogan, Anand, Liden, & Chaudhry, 2014). The undesirable behavior may suggest that disengaged employees are withdrawing from adverse work conditions or deciding to

leave (Li & Liao, 2014; Vidyanthi et al., 2014). Employees that recognize a manager's interest in establishing a relationship may not feel indebted to the manager, but they may appreciate the perceived support (Mignonac & Richebe, 2013).

**Job satisfaction.** Employees' satisfaction with their jobs is vital to the success of any business (Karatepe, 2013). Walsh and Bartikowski (2013) noted that strong employee satisfaction scores correlated with a lower intention to terminate employment. Tews, Michel, and Stafford (2013) also found that an employee's job satisfaction may increase employee retention. Further, employees that received continuous management and co-worker support experienced a high level of attachment and satisfaction with their jobs (Karatepe, 2013). Job satisfaction is one predictive of an employee's turnover intention (Regts & Molleman, 2013).

**Compensation.** The amount of compensation employees receive plays a substantial role in retaining employees (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). For example, companies that surveyed employees during exit interviews reported the top reason that employees terminate current employment is to accept higher paying jobs with other organizations (Bryant & Allen, 2013; Gupta & Shaw, 2014). Employers choosing to undercompensate their employees run the risk of trained employees quitting to seek higher wages and benefits at another organization (Bryant & Allen, 2013).

**Coaching opportunities.** Beattie et al. (2014) explained that managers must look for opportunities to allow workers to challenge themselves in situations where their skills and competencies can grow. Employee coaching has an empowerment benefit for the involved workers (Bryant & Allen, 2013). Developmental opportunities presented to

employees can be a combination of an individual employee development plan and management coaching (Kandampully et al., 2014). Depending on the task that managers provide to employees, it is helpful to both parties when employees develop the necessary skills (Kandampully et al., 2014). Employee retention enhances via career development opportunities and coaching (Kim, Egan, Kim, & Kim, 2013). Managers who take a proactive interest in being knowledgeable about employee retention factors, or the positive effects of coaching employees, boost retention metrics in their organizations (Kim et al., 2013).

**Developing retention strategies.** Research has also shown that developing a strategy is a means to focus organizational efforts on achieving the desired goal (Pangarkar, 2011). Managers who have a set of effective retention strategies can make more efficient use of time, energy, and resources (Kandampully et al., 2014; Ryu & Lee, 2013). An employee retention strategy is a description of how a manager plans to achieve the improved employee retention results (Shahid & Azhar, 2013). The strategy process is less precise than an action plan (Milman & Dickson, 2014). A manager's action plan includes a written outline for who, what, when, and how to implement the proposed action in the organization (Pangarkar, 2011; Ryu & Lee, 2013). Management strategies can be the product of an organized and rigorous planning process (Park & Levy, 2014; Ryu & Lee, 2013). Pangarkar (2011) noted that managers with strategies that helped propel them to an industry pinnacle arrived at the winning strategy through trial, error, and unanticipated success. As organizations' leaders strive for a deeper understanding of effective employee retention strategies, it is crucial to understanding the processes by

which an effective strategy formed (Park & Levy, 2014).

As noted by Milman and Dickson (2014), learning the strategies that managers use to retain employees is a more proactive approach than studying why an employee terminates employment. Business community managers can develop strategies that ensure the quality of the goods or services they produce will improve the multidisciplinary workplace (Gershengorn, Kocher, & Factor, 2014). Organizations benefit from shared sets of strategies (Milman & Dickson, 2014). Managers at different career levels can be empowered to make proactive decisions without waiting to react to shifting pressures arising from an ever-changing environment (Gershengorn et al., 2014). For example, implementing a targeted strategy for employee retention in occupations experiencing labor shortages demonstrates a managerial sensitivity to the organizational need for stability and sustained profitability (Gershengorn et al., 2014). With this background in mind, Kandampully et al. (2014) recommended that researchers seek to understand how hospitality service managers have developed retention strategies over time to retain employees. The strategies that emerge from this study may provide managers a better understanding of techniques and strategies traditionally used in the hospitality industry to retain employees.

### **The Need for Employee Retention Strategies**

Losing the best worker could negatively affect business on a strategic level (Cardy & Lengnick-Hall, 2011). Mitchell, Burch, and Lee (2014) focused on the past, present, and the future across levels of employee retention practices and found there is still a need to study retention strategies. Cardy and Lengnick-Hall (2011) found that



employment relationships are voluntary, and employees consider the option of remaining in the organization or leaving the job. A manager's employee retention techniques can influence an employee's desire to stay with the organization for a longer period (Cardy & Lengnick-Hall, 2011). Researchers noted that employee retention research focused on the need for managers to create employee access to growing opportunities (Collins-Camargo, Ellett, & Lester, 2012; Gounaris & Boukis, 2013). Organizational stakeholders have a high regard for human capital (Gounaris & Boukis, 2013). For this reason, managers can retain employees to provide a competitive advantage (Gounaris & Boukis, 2013). Effective employee retention strategies can motivate employees to contribute effectively and remain with the organization for the maximum time (Collins-Camargo et al., 2012). Employee retention is a fundamental organizational success factor; deploying effective employee retention strategies increases the chances of retaining long-term high performing employees (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011).

Researchers have studied employee retention to understand what strategies are being used in the workplace. However, some leaders of hospitality organizations still need effective employee retention strategies (Crick & Spencer, 2011; Lub, Nije Bijvank, Matthijs Bal, Blomme, & Schalk, 2012). Lub et al. (2012) noted that, despite the availability of retention strategies within some hospitality organizations, employers still lack strategies to retain employees with the organizations. Hospitality managers need to develop and implement effective retention strategies that make employees feel valued and motivated (Lub et al., 2012). Conversely, Tavitiyaman, Qiu Zhang, and Qu (2012) found evidence that effective employee retention strategies and aligned organizational

structure can explain positive hospitality organization performance. A manager's ability to understand and provide for employee needs could influence an employee to remain in the organization (Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2014). Carraher (2011) concluded that understanding how to retain employees is crucial to creating an environment that motivates and stimulates employees to want to stay within an organization.

### **Transition**

Section 1 of this proposal included an introduction to the problem under study, namely to uncover experiences of some hospitality managers with retention strategies to retain employees. Employee retention is a widely studied issue in many fields, especially the hospitality industry. For that reason, researchers are giving more attention to studying this phenomenon to help organizations recognize what strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention.

In my review of the literature, I included information on leadership styles that are more effective in motivating employees, building employees' satisfaction, and creating a healthy workplace (Caruthers, 2011). In addition, I provided three major theories regarding employee motivation that have emerged. The conceptual theories are Maslow's (1943) motivation theory, Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory, and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Managers need to understand the different dimensions of employee motivation, such as personal growth, relationships, professional growth, and compensation, addressed by these theories.

In Section 2, I elaborated on the processes and procedures for the qualitative multiple case study research design used for this study. I described the research methods

that I used to explore experiences of some hospitality managers with employee retention strategies for reducing turnover.

## Section 2: The Project

In Section 1, the focus of the literature review was on the managerial characteristics that promote employee retention. In Section 2, I presented the research portion of the project, the restatement of the purpose of the study, and descriptions of how I conducted the study. In this section, I also described the role of the researcher, research methods, research question, study population, data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. The population consisted of experienced hospitality managers in Brevard County, Florida, who implemented strategies to improve employee retention. Three experienced hospitality managers with supervision and hiring responsibilities from mid-sized hospitality organizations participated. Hospitality managers were appropriate for this study because these managers were most suited to identify the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention with the consideration of real-life experiences. I also collected and analyzed documents and I used a reflective journal to methodologically triangulate the data. The implications for positive social change included possible changes to impact business practices by providing hospitality managers strategies needed for improving employee retention, thus improving the stability of and customers' experiences with their organizations (Malik & Usman, 2011).

### **Role of the Researcher**

Morse, Lowery, and Steury (2014) recommended that researchers collect the perceived and lived descriptions of the people in a phenomenon and explain singularities that can be lead to improvement in many fields of study. In a qualitative study, the researcher is one of the data collection instruments (Eide & Showalter, 2012; Morse et al., 2014). In this study, I served as the primary data collector. The role of the researcher in qualitative studies is to gather information accurately, report all data collected, and identify shared lived experiences regarding the phenomenon (Eide & Showalter, 2012). I collected data in a trustworthy manner by adhering to the protocols set forth in the Belmont Report (Davis, 2013; Thomas, 2015) to mitigate the bias I had on the phenomenon under study. I treated study participants in an ethical manner by respecting their lived perceptions and by making efforts to secure their well-being (Eide & Showalter, 2012). As the researcher, I protected and ensured the rights of human participants are summarized in the Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], 1979). After receiving approval to conduct the study from the Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), all study participants received and signed a participant consent form prior to each interview (see Appendix A).

According to the Belmont Report, research participants received respect, time, and the opportunity to decide whether to participate in the study (HHS, 1979). Participation in my study was voluntary, and I provided prospective participants the information they needed to determine whether they desired to enter into the research study (see Appendix A). I treated each person in an ethical manner. As required by

human subjects protocols identified in the Belmont Report (HHS, 1979), I respected each person's decision regarding participation in the study and protected them from harm by protecting their identifiable information. I am the only person with access to identifiable information from the participants such as their names and organization information. I gained and maintained the trust of the participants by keeping all of their identifiable information secure, to maximize their benefits of participating in the study and minimize potential perceptions of harm by the participants.

I was familiar with the topic of this study because I was once a management executive in the retail industry with experience in retaining employees. To mitigate bias, I identified my bias through the use of epoché. Moustakas (1994) recommended that the qualitative researcher use epoché by documenting and describing his or her experiences regarding the phenomenon before studying the phenomenon to study the phenomenon from a fresh perspective. Epoché, or bracketing, is a technique used by researchers to describe their experiences within or about the phenomenon before data collection to mitigate bias (Moustakas, 1994). Following Moustakas' (1994) recommendations, I acknowledged underlying perceptions of my research topic to mitigate bias in data through the use of bracketing. Moustakas (1994) idea of implementating a mitigating bias technique increased my alertness of my feelings about the phenomenon under study. I conducted the doctoral research in the county where I lived. I had no professional or personal relationship with any of the hospitality organizations or managers that participated in my study. As I identified and bracketed my personal viewpoints sought to better understand the viewpoints of others under study in the phenomenon (Marshall &

Rossmann, 2011).

Maslow's (1943) motivation theory (1943), Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory, and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory served as the lenses I used to analyze interviews and company employee-retention documentation data. I applied the components of these theories to my research data to understand what employee retention strategies that some managers are using to improve employee retention from an employee motivation perspective. I used the interview questions to document each participant's experiences with addressing potential declines in motivation and changes in the workplace needs to overcome employee retention obstacles through specific strategies.

Applebaum (2012) noted that qualitative interview questions encourage respondents to provide detailed answers. Following the recommendations by Kisely and Kendall (2011) on interview protocols, I established an interview protocol to ensure that I treated each participant the same, thus helping to mitigate bias. Interview questions for this study were open-ended, which I designed to prompt the participants to provide richer, in-depth descriptions that answered the central research question through semistructured interviews (Englander, 2012; Rice et al., 2014). The interview protocol consisted of the following six steps: (a) an opening statement; (b) semistructured interview questioning; (c) probing questions; (d) participants verifying themes noted during the interview; (e) corrections to themes noted by the participants; and (f) a recording of reflexive notes (Hudson et al., 2014; Kisely & Kendall, 2011; see Appendix D).

## **Participants**

I strictly followed Walden University's Institutional Review Board's (IRB) guidelines as well as research protocols identified in the Belmont Report in recruiting study participants. I selected each participant by using the same study participation criteria for selecting all participants. I gave each potential participant an informed consent letter for the study, which included an explanation of the trusted nature of the study, and required each participant to sign an informed consent form prior to each interview (see Appendix A).

Study participants worked as hospitality managers in Brevard County, Florida, had at a minimum 5 years of managerial experience, and were at least 18 years of age. The participants in the study were solicited to participate in a voluntary interview. The process of purposefully selecting participants by researchers is necessary in order to target a population that meets certain established criteria to gain a sample of participants in the phenomenon (Davis, 2013, Kolb, 2012; Suri, 2011). Rowley (2012) claimed that selecting a population and using more than 10 participants does not guarantee sufficient data needed for a case study. I selected members of my study population based on the criteria that I established for defining that population. Yin (2014) theorized that researchers can compare two or three cases in a phenomenon to examine if there are common experiences among the cases. I interviewed members of the target population and analyzed the company documents pertaining to employee retention until I reached data saturation. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) defined data saturation as the point in data collection and analysis when data from new interviews produces little or no change



to the already noted themes or codes.

After I received approval from the Walden University IRB (approval number 07-27-15-0449573), I proceeded to identify and recruit eligible study participants. In order to gain access to and establish a working relationship with the participants in the study, I began recruiting in Brevard County through personal contacts and a recruitment letter (see Appendix B) to identify eligible hospitality managers. Tirgari (2012) recommended that when a researcher interviews one participant, he or she should ask the participant if they can recommend other candidates they feel would be willing to participate. Baltar and Brunet (2012) and Hancock and Gile (2011), referred to this method as snowball sampling. I was prepared to use snowball sampling to identify other eligible study participants if the data did not reach saturation. However, through the use of personal contacts and purposive sampling similar to that used by Davis (2013), I successfully solicited three study participants who provided the real-life context I needed to answer the research question. To understand the real-life experiences of those currently in hospitality management positions, I utilized a qualitative multiple case study approach.

### **Research Method**

There are three choices of research methods: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Ostlund, Kidd, Wengstrom, & Rowa-Dewar, 2011). This study involved investigating a phenomenon and presenting data from multiple sources of evidence such as semistructured interviews and a review of documentation which is why I chose a qualitative research method. Exploring the different aspects of individual perspectives helps determine how individuals interact with their environment (Ostlund et al., 2011).

The research method for this study was qualitative to gain an understanding of retention strategies of hospitality managers with the consideration of real-life experiences (Yin, 2014) and strategies used to improve employee retention.

A qualitative research method was the most valuable research method for this study to explore the in-depth experiences of the participants (Davis, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Utilizing qualitative methods enabled me to explore the experiences of hospitality managers using interviews and company documents pertaining to employee retention to understand the phenomenon of employee retention strategies in the hospitality industry. Qualitative methods permit researchers to ask questions of the participants who have experiences pertaining to what, where, and how the phenomenon under study affects them (Barratt et al., 2011).

Quantitative research involves the use of testing and verifying or rejecting a hypothesis (Vasquez, 2014). Conversely, a qualitative research method permits the understanding of experiences of a particular phenomenon within a real-world context (Borrego, Dougals, & Amelink, 2011; Echambadi, Campbell, & Agarwal, 2012; Yin, 2014). A quantitative approach was not an ideal study for exploring perspectives related to strategies for retaining employees (Kamil, Mosenthal, Pearson, & Barr, 2014; Vasquez, 2014). Quantitative methods require the use of numerical data and statistical analysis to examine correlations between two variables, the independent and the dependent (Barratt et al., 2011). Examining correlations between variables was not the purpose of this proposed research. The use of a quantitative method quantifies the results and highlights problems based on the data provided (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). The

use of a quantitative method cannot provide the researcher an understanding of the descriptive articulation of personal experiences (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). A quantitative method was not well suited for addressing my research question.

Mixed methods research focuses on the exploration of problems and solutions instead of understanding the cause of problems (Sparkes, 2014). Mixed methods include a quantitative and a qualitative component (Bansal & Corely, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. Mixed method designs consist of the researcher using a combination of deductive and inductive methods when one method is not sufficient (Bansal & Corely, 2012). The objective of this study was not to test a theory or hypothesis, but to compile hospitality managers' strategies used to retain employees in the hospitality industry (Borrego et al., 2011). A mixed method that includes a quantitative component was not necessary to answer my research question.

### **Research Design**

I explored four qualitative designs to determine which design provided the best fit : (a) narrative, (b) ethnography, (c) phenomenological study, and (d) case study. I selected a case study for the study's research design. A case study research design allows the researcher to explore and conduct a comprehensive analysis of an experience in order to gain a full understanding of the real-world context (Reiter, Stewart, & Bruce, 2011; Yin, 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore each study respondent's real-life experiences, analyze documents, and search for themes consistent with the research literature, and investigate the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Given the importance of

exploring strategies for hospitality managers to use in order to improve employee retention, I conducted a multiple case study. By including multiple cases, I hoped to add complexity and richness to the literature and discover what was unique about the retention strategies of hospitality managers with the consideration of real-life experiences (Stake, 1995) used to implement employee retention strategies.

A case study design was the most applicable to this study. Conducting case study research allows the researcher to conduct exploratory research to ask how or what questions (Gioia et al., 2012; Yin, 2014). Case study research allowed me to comprehend the characteristics of the real-life events that some hospitality managers experience (Gioia et al., 2012; Yin, 2014). The use of a case study design enabled me to conduct an investigation to get close to several individuals and their interactions on a day-to-day practice (Moll, 2012). Stake (1995) noted researchers who used multiple cases had an opportunity to bridge the findings from a single case experience together with similar individuals in the phenomenon to derive an answer to the research question. I selected a multiple case study design for the study. Additionally, Yin (2014) stated that researchers who used case studies used multiple sources of evidence from multiple organizations to collect the data needed to gain an understanding of the experience in a real-life context. I used open-ended questions presented through semistructured face to face interviews and company documents related employee retention strategies for data collection to document managers' experiences with employee retention strategies. I used a case study research design to gain insight into the circumstantial conditions and collect multiple sources of data from participants in the phenomenon (Yin, 2014).

A multiple case study is an appropriate design if participants are representatives of the same group in the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2014). I examined a small population of hospitality managers in similar settings to explore, describe, and explain a phenomenon in a real-life context (Yin, 2014). I used multiple types of data including interviews and company documents pertaining to employee retention strategies approaches to gather data (Gioia et al., 2012; Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012; Yin, 2014). Similar to Gibbons (2015), I reviewed prior research findings to eliminate research designs for use in my study based on how researchers used each design in practice.

Researchers who use narrative inquiry to explore a phenomenon use data collection techniques that include field notes, letters, stories, autobiographies, journals, photographs, discussions, consultations, family stories, and life experiences as information sources (Banister, Bunn, Burman, & Daniels, 2011; Elliot, 2011). Elliot (2011) and Wells (2011) noted that a researcher using narrative inquiries collects stories, group conversations, and documents as the primary source of data. A narrative design was unsuitable for the proposed study because narrative researchers explore small life-long stories to capture the essence of the phenomenon (Kar & Samantarai, 2011). In this study, I was not seeking to document and use stories from participants to retell stories in unique ways.

Observations in ethnographic research can result in an overview of a phenomenon that is being studied (Lambert, Glacken, & McCarron, 2013). Ethnographic inquiry methods are appropriate to determine cultural characteristics, such as class, race, and gender of the whole group (Lambert et al., 2013). A researcher who uses ethnographic

inquiry attempts to absorb himself or herself into the day to day activities of the study group for an extended period (Ronald, 2011). This study did not determine cultural characteristics, such as class, race, and gender of the whole organization. I did document the lived experiences of hospitality managers related to employee retention strategies.

A phenomenological design requires the researcher use at least 20 participants and a great deal of time immersed in the study from the inception up to the point of data analysis (Bevan, 2014). The use of a phenomenological design does not include the use of the secondary documentation to implement methodological triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Roberston & Thompson, 2014; Yin, 2014). I considered the use of a phenomenological design to explore the experiences of managers from their perspectives and to uncover and analyze themes that could have developed from the use of interviewing participants (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, & Herber, 2014). A phenomenology design was not the most appropriate method to explore a particular and complex phenomenon within its real-world context, which was the intent of my study (Yin, 2014). When a researcher is conducting exploratory research, studying the phenomenon in a natural setting, or determining what happened or why it happened, Yin (2014) suggested that a case study research design is most suitable.

Qualitative researchers analyze their data throughout their study, unlike quantitative researchers (Morse et al., 2014). Rowley (2012) stated that case study research requires a sample size between one and 10 participants. A sample population of larger than 10 participants does not guarantee richness in data (Rowley, 2012). Interviews in qualitative studies are conducted with study participants until the data reaches

saturation (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011). Data saturation is the point in data collection and data analysis when information from data produce little or no change to the already noted themes or codes (Davis, 2013; Guest et al., 2006; Kolb, 2012). Yin (2014) stated that a population sample size of two or three case studies could be enough to explore a phenomenon if the researcher's applied theory is straightforward, and the degree of certainty is not extreme. Guest et al. (2006) determined that data saturation can occur within the first six interviews conducted in a study. To ensure there were sufficient data to analyze, I interviewed the target population and analyzed the company employee retention documents until the data reached saturation. I coded and analyzed all of the data in my study including my reflexive journal, the interviews, and company documents pertaining to employee retention strategies. The use of face-to-face semistructured interviews and other data collection methods did not allow me to gather data about the real-life experiences of some managers in the hospitality industry relating to employee retention strategies. Thus, prior research supported my use of a small sample size of participants for this study.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for the study consisted of three hospitality managers from mid-sized hospitality organizations in Brevard County, Florida. Yin (2014) noted that researchers use an exploratory multiple case study if participants are representatives of the same group. I used a purposive selection strategy to select members of my study population that have experience in the development of retention strategies (Davis, 2013). I contacted potential participants through personal contacts, a recruitment letter (see

Appendix B), and a list of hospitality organizations in Brevard County, Florida. I anticipated recruiting additional participants through snowball sampling. Tirgari (2012) described that snowball sampling as asking a study participant to suggest someone else who might be willing or appropriate for the study. I did not use snowball sampling techniques because purposeful sampling allowed me to intentionally sample a group of people who have real-life experiences about the problem under investigation (Walker, 2012). Purposive sampling methods are advantageous when conducting case study research (MacBeth et al., 2014). Researchers who use purposive sampling create a descriptive analysis of the phenomenon (MacBeth et al., 2014; Xie, Wu, Luo, & Hu, 2012).

Borrego et al. (2011) defended the use of a population and selection criteria in a study to guarantee the selection of study participants that represent the research phenomenon. Researchers have reported the population size should be large enough to bring credibility to the study, yet small enough to allow for adequate depth, detail, and richness of the case (Rowley, 2012). A population size of two to three cases is recommended by Yin (2014) when conducting multiple case studies, and two to three cases are sufficient as a prediction of literal replication of real-life experiences within the context of the phenomenon. Researchers conducting multiple case studies with a population size of two or three may obtain rich data using interviews and secondary data to achieve an understanding of the phenomenon (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011; Rowley, 2012; Yin, 2014). A small number of participants in a case study is enough (Rowley, 2012) if the theory is straightforward (Yin, 2014). I limited participants in the study to a



specific geographic location and a particular type of organization to find participant representatives within the same geographical setting (Yin, 2014). The population and geographic area selected were suitable for the proposed multiple case study the strategies that hospitality managers in Brevard County, Florida need to improve employee retention in hospitality organizations in a state with similar economic and growth challenges as well as other states in the southeastern United States.

Participants in the study worked as a manager in hospitality organizations located in Brevard County, Florida, had a minimum of 5 years of experience in management, a minimum of a bachelor's degree, experience implementing retention strategies, and were at least 18 years of age. These characteristics helped me narrow the population of study participants to experienced managers who varied in their perceptions and lived experiences with employee retention issues. As recommended by Yin (2014) for case studies, I collected secondary data in the form of documentation that aided in identifying strategies to promote employee retention. I interviewed participants until I determined that the data reached saturation. I knew when the data reached saturation in my study when no new information or no new themes emerged, and there was sufficient information to replicate the study (Guest et al., 2006).

Gathering sufficient amounts of data was critical to support the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Rennie, 2012). The data reached saturation when the participants offered no new information after verifying notes from other participants previously interviewed (Kolb, 2012). Reaching saturation in the data was required and was my goal in exploring the experiences of hospitality managers

and their retention strategies. To ensure there were sufficient data to analyze, I interviewed the targeted population and analyzed company documents about employee retention until the data reached saturation (Guest et al., 2006). Overall, Yin (2014) justified the use of a small population size of participants when conducting multiple case studies.

When I identified a potential study participant, I made an appointment for a time to meet in-person to review the study protocol, participants' rights, and I conducted the interview after the manager consented to participate (Davis, 2013). As recommended by Davis (2013) and Tigari (2012) for study settings, I asked each participant to meet in a mutually agreed upon private location outside of the manager's work site to gather as much detail about their employee retention strategies as possible. The interview location took place in a private and quiet setting that was convenient for each study participant. After conducting and transcribing the participant's interview, I asked each participant to conduct member checking.

Member checking is a process of the researcher restating, summarizing, or paraphrasing the information received from a study participant to ensure their comments have been interpreted accurately (Stake, 1995). I conducted member checking to allow participants to verify the accuracy of my interpretations of their real-life experiences (Harper & Cole, 2012). The process I followed was restating or summarizing the participants' views, feelings, and experiences, and asking them to either affirm or correct my interpretations (Harper & Cole, 2012). After data collection, member checking involved providing the preliminary findings to the participants, asking for critical

feedback on the findings, and incorporating these critiques into the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995). Subsequently, I transcribed and proofread each participant's interview responses and provided each participant a copy of the interview questions and my summary of their interview responses, then asked each participant to verify if I had accurately summarized their intended responses (Harper & Cole, 2012; Stake, 1995). At that time, the participant had the opportunity to affirm or correct the accuracy and completeness of my synthesis of their interview responses (Harper & Cole, 2012). Following each interview, study participants received a thank you for their participation in the study in addition to a final copy of the study's findings via e-mail or mail.

### **Ethical Research**

The researcher has the sole responsibility to protect participants and strengthen the validity of the research results (Eide & Showalter, 2012). In this study, to comply with the Belmont Report ethical guidelines, I protected the rights and confidentiality of research participants (HHS, 1979). The informed consent letter (see Appendix A) outlines the precautionary measures that I followed when conducting my research. Each hospitality manager voluntarily consented to participate in the study. I did not harm the participants, and I minimized risks by protecting the participants' identification and their respective organizations (HHS, 1979). I selected each participant fairly by using the same study participation criteria for selecting each participant (HHS, 1979). Carenza (2011) and Sherrod (2011) justified the inclusion of precautionary measures to protect the identity of participants. The measures that I followed were: (a) assigning identification markings to identify participants instead of participant names, (b) assigning identification

markings to label all participant data, and (c) assigning identification markings to reference the participants in the research results. Xie et al. (2012) concluded that incorporating precautionary measures could lessen the potential harm to respondents. I implemented ethical assurances by explaining rights of study participants and obtaining informed consent from each participant, protecting the participants' rights to privacy, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining honesty in collaborating with other professional colleagues (HHS, 1979; Xie et al., 2012). I obtained consent to use and reproduce employee retention documents from each hospitality company's official with the authority to release those documents. The consent and document release form (see Appendix E) outlines the measures I followed to protect the information in those documents, which were confidential and not disclosed. Participants in the study were not offered any incentive for their participation in the study to avoid coercion. Compensation was not offered to all the participants to avoid influence based on the financial gain (Fein & Kulik, 2011).

To protect participants' identities and job descriptions, I was the only person with information on participants' identification details and access to their personal data. I protected the names of the participants and the organizations they represented at all times. I assigned identification numbers to participants in the form of P1 – P3 to distinguish the interview responses for the purpose of transcribing and coding the data. If a participant wished to withdraw at any point during the study, even after the conclusion of data collection, I honored their request. Participants were permitted to withdraw at any time without penalty or notification. The participants were allowed to contact me by phone or

e-mail to ask to withdraw, and I withdrew them with no further explanation. Once I received a participant's request to withdraw, I contacted them to confirm their request and inform them that I removed all of their information from the study. I removed all of a participant's information from my files by shredding printed information and erasing electronically stored information. In addition to a copy of the consent form, each study participant received copies of the information about the data storage and disposal process before the start of each interview. The data storage and disposal process entailed storing electronic data on a computer hard drive on a computer that is password protected. I had sole access to the electronic files. I locked all secondary data documents, which included my reflective journal and company documentation, in a safe that only I can access. After 5 years, I will destroy the data by shredding copies of printed information and electronically erasing all study files on the computer.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Data collection in qualitative research can involve direct interactions with an individual or interaction in a group setting (Petty et al., 2012). As the researcher in a qualitative study, I was the data collection instrument. Carenza (2011) noted that the researcher is the instrument for data collection and analysis across all phases of a qualitative research project. This role increases the unavoidability of a transmission of interest, values, and emotions when collecting data (Anyan, 2013; Harnish, 2013).

I was interested in adding to the body of knowledge on strategies that hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. To mitigate bias, I only interviewed managers with whom I had no professional or personal relationship with the phenomenon

under examination. Additionally, I implemented a reflexive journaling process to bracket my experiences regarding the phenomenon under examination.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended that implementing a journaling process to ensure mitigation of personal bias, morals, or beliefs when conducting qualitative research. Researchers have found that a total detachment of a researcher's personal perceptions is unattainable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yu, 2014). In qualitative research, the researcher is an integral component of the entire research process. However, researchers can mitigate biases using a reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the researcher, my viewpoint and assumptions can inevitably influence the context of the participants' experiences under investigation. Ponterotto (2014) and Fields and Kafri (2009) concluded that the use of reflexive journals could increase a researcher's ability to maintain a reflexive stance toward the phenomenon under study. A reflexive journal was another form of bracketing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used a research reflexive journal to include bracketing from the beginning of this research process when I first conceptualized the idea to explore the phenomenon and continued throughout the research.

Some of the primary sources for collecting qualitative data are focus groups, observations, individual interviews, and documentation (Petty et al., 2012). Qualitative researchers aim to explore and understand participants' experiences (Tembo, Parker, & Higgins, 2013) in-depth and to associate meanings across populations. I used in-depth, semistructured interviews as the process to collect primary data in this study. Ocak (2011) determined that interviews are a useful approach for collecting data from participants regarding a phenomenon. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that prolonged

engagements are investments of sufficient time to achieve learning the perceptions of the phenomenon and building the trust of the participants. It is imperative for researchers to be involved long enough in a study to detect and take into account biases that might otherwise affect the interpretation of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this reason, I utilized semistructured interview questions supported by my literature review to gather hospitality managers' experiences with implementing employee retention strategies.

Interviews are forms of prolonged engagement that I used to become oriented to the phenomenon, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested as one of the strategies that will increase the credibility of a study. I used semistructured interview questions to probe participants' experiences as I observed, documented, and described the participants' responses to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Interview questions are available in Appendix C. I did not conduct a pilot test of the interview questions. Gibbons (2015) allowed the participants in his study to clarify questions during the interview process, and I afforded my study participants the same opportunity. In addition to in-depth interviews, I expanded data collected from the interviews with other secondary data. I asked each participant for company documents and records pertaining to employee retention strategies, which was similar to the method used by Gibbons (2015) and Thomas (2015), so that I had secondary data that were useful in understanding what employee retention strategies are used to improve employee I conducted member checking. Member checking took place after I coded and analyzed each interview and company documents pertaining to employee retention strategies. I paraphrased the information received from the participant responses to the interview

questions and the company documents pertaining to employee retention, and then I asked each participant to verify that I had accurately interpreted these (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995). Asking the participants to review a summary of my interpretation of their responses to the interview questions and company documents pertaining to employee retention strategies can increase the trustworthiness of the finalized analyzes and conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Hudson et al. (2014) recommended that researchers conduct member checking to verify the accuracy of the information obtained from study participants. Another aspect of member checking is a participant verification process (Harper & Cole, 2012) done by asking the participant to check the researcher's interpretations of their comments and analysis of the company documents pertaining to employee retention strategies. Member checking follows the data collection process and consists of reporting back preliminary findings to participants, asking for critical feedback on the findings, and incorporating any critique into the findings (Goldblatt, Karnieli-Miller, and Neumann, 2011). I contacted participants to verify my summary and interpretations of their interview responses and summarized company documentation pertaining to employee retention strategies during data analysis and data coding to testing the emerging interpretations and conclusions (Stake, 1995). The summary of the participant responses and company documents pertaining to employee retention strategies consisted of a description of the key themes that emerged from the participant responses to the interview questions and the company documentation pertaining to employee retention strategies. By providing the participants the opportunity to check for any misinterpretation of their responses ensured



that I captured their intended views.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Ponterotto (2014) noted that a researcher should try to put aside his or her perceptions to focus on the phenomenon. It is impossible for a researcher to remove all personal biases (Fields & Kafi, 2009; Ponterotto, 2014), a researcher can mitigate the potential adverse effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research (Fields & Kafi, 2009; Ponterotto, 2014). When a researcher facilitates epoché, they can increase the rigor of their academic research project (Kamil et al., 2014; Yu, 2014). Researchers found that too much time on an emotionally challenging topic could result in inherent challenges and skew the results and interpretations (Pfaff, Baxter, Jacks, & Ploeg, 2014; Ponterottos, 2014). As recommended for researchers by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I developed a reflexive journal that includes reasons for undertaking the research.

Moustakas (1994) recommended that researchers start the journaling process by using the technique of bracketing to identify biases and beliefs. A researcher uses bracketing so that he or she may be aware of any potential biases that they need to set aside to view the phenomenon under study from a fresh perspective (Moustakas, 1994). During the research process, I used a journal to express personal assumptions and clarify individual belief systems to identify, manage, determine, and mitigate any potential bias that could affect the study results. I had no personal or professional connection with the participants and organizations that I included in this study. I mitigated bias while studying the phenomenon by not having personal or professional connections to the participants or organizations in my study.

Given my experience as a manager, the relationship between my experiences and the research topic may both precede and develop during the process of this qualitative research (Crauthers, 2011; Ponterotto, 2014). To protect my study and myself, I implemented a method of epoché by engaging in semistructured face to face interviews, which was similar to Ponerotto (2014). The extended length of time required for this data collection technique could be a potential constraint to the data collection process. A manager could have felt that he or she did not have sufficient time to participate in the study. I provided all potential participants the opportunity to decide not to participate. I made every effort to work with participants by finding times that best fit their schedules to minimize conflicts with their assigned duties. Additionally, allowing too much time to pass between data collection, data interpretation, and member checking could have led to participants forgetting details regarding the interviews and the verification of my interpretation of their responses being compromised (Harper & Cole, 2012; Kelty, Julian, & Ross, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Harper and Cole (2012) described that member checking was a part of the quality control process as member checking provided the participants the opportunity to review their statements for accuracy. After each participant had confirmed the accuracy of my interpretation of their responses, I analyzed the data for common patterns and synthesized the meaning of each participant's experience as it related to the themes that derived from the research findings.

An advantage of a multiple case study is that the researcher collects data from multiple cases where large samples of similar participants are not available in the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The utilization of multiple case studies allowed me the

opportunity to collect detailed secondary data, such as documentation. Yin (2014) recommended the use of secondary data because it allow the researcher to access data that would not normally to access data normally not included in other research designs. Despite the advantages of utilizing a group or unit, one of the common criticisms is the data collected and the findings cannot necessarily transfer to a wider population (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012; Yin, 2014). Case study designs are believed to be too broad for transferability (Yin, 2014) and lead to researchers giving too much attention to detail in design, implementation, analysis, and reporting findings that only support their interpretations (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012; Wang, Conboy, & Pikkariainen, 2012). Yin (2014) justified the use of a template for exploratory case studies requiring strict adherence to clarify (a) what is to be explored, (b) the purpose of the exploration, and (c) the criteria by which the phenomenon is interpreted. Furthermore, Yin (2014) justified the use of methodological triangulation, a technique to ensure the trustworthiness of a finished case study. Researchers use triangulation to gather multiple perspectives of the phenomenon to have a complete understanding of the phenomenon under study (Stake, 1995). Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple qualitative methods to verify if conclusions from each of the data collection methods, such as interviewing, observation, document analysis, or any other feasible method, are the same to establish validity of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2012; Yin, 2014). I used the multiple qualitative methods to verify if conclusions from each of the data collection methods, interviewing and document analysis, were the same to establish the validity of the study findings.

Semistructured interviews are used in multiple case studies instead of structured interviews because this format allows the participants to elaborate on experiences and leaves little room for misinterpretation (Boudville, Anjou, & Taylor, 2013). The use of semistructured interviews for data collection may lessen the participants' accuracy and completeness of their response due to the limited flexibility of interview questions (Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, & McKinney, 2012). However, the use of open-ended questions can be difficult to analyze and compare participants' responses (Gubrium et al., 2012) in following replication logic. Yin (2014) described the use of replication logic as exploring a minimum of two to three cases to gather facts from various data sources and draw conclusions from those facts in comparison to those of similar backgrounds. I used a semistructured interview technique so that I could focus on the participant and ask probing questions. Semistructured interview procedures permit researchers to probe the participants (Whittemore, 2014). Probing participants consists of asking each participant questions that require them to elaborate on their responses and explore further the meaning of the phenomenon (Whittemore, 2014). I carefully selected individuals who had all experienced the phenomenon so that I could report common descriptions of that phenomenon.

Interviews were conducted in-person at a secure location established by each participant and myself. Data collection through in-person interviews is advantageous because researchers gather quotes and descriptions of what is important to the participants while evaluating the nonverbal and paralinguistic behaviors of the participants (Gubrium et al., 2012). However, the disadvantages of this data collection

technique included the time and the expense required to complete the data collection process (Gubrium et al., 2012). Verner and Abdullah (2012) recommended that researchers provide study participants the opportunity to establish a private setting for the interview to protect their confidentiality and their organization's identity. All participants in the population received an introduction letter, and e-mail explaining the study and participant criteria, requesting their participation and asking interested individuals to reply to me by phone (see Appendix B). Following the introduction letter and e-mail, I made personal telephone calls to each potential participant to answer questions and ask for their participation.

Prior to the start of the interview, I provided each study participant a copy of an informed consent form as well as a verbal summary explanation of what to expect, reaffirmed the participant's confidentiality, and the benefits of the study. I explained that a participant could voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, even after data collection has ended, and that to withdraw, a participant only needed to contact me by telephone, mail or e-mail. I also reviewed the consent form with each participant, asked if they have any questions, concerns, or need clarification, and asked for a signature if they were willing to participate in the interview and study. Participants received a copy of the consent form for them to retain prior to the inception of each interview. I stored all signed consent forms together with all other study information and data in a locked safe that only I can access. At the end of 5 years, I will destroy all data and paperwork by shredding copies of printed information and electronically erasing all files on the computer.

In addition to data collection through in-depth face to face, semistructured interviews, and company documentation were collected from each participant (Gibbons, 2015; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) concluded that case study research allows the researcher to collect several sources of data, which include document and archival records of data. Collecting documentation and archival records was advantageous because participants provided access to company retention information that was not available in public records (Bryde, Broquetas, & Volm, 2013). Conversely, the disadvantages of using this data collection method increase subjectivity regarding the participants' preferred employee retention strategies and the information may be unavailable, outdated, incomplete or inaccurate (Bryde et al., 2013). Although the use of this secondary data source had disadvantages, the advantages of requesting supporting documentation enabled me to access data that I could not otherwise obtain. I asked each participant if he or she had any supporting documents on employee retention strategies they use to improve employee retention. I hoped to add to a rich description of the real-life context of the hospital manager retention strategies as well as offer a means of triangulating the data gathered in the interviews by collecting multiple sources of secondary data (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). I asked the participants if they had any documentation or physical they use to improve employee retention.

Davis (2013) received approval from study participants before conducting audio-recorded interviews for a study on managers' and employees' job satisfaction and turnover within the federal government. Likewise, I requested and obtained approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to recruiting and

conducting interviews with study participants as well as obtained a signed consent form from each participant for my study records. Each interview began once a participant signed and returned the consent form (see Appendix A). Participants who accepted the invitation to participate in the study made their decisions on a voluntary basis and received no gifts or compensation of any kind for their participation. On the day of each interview, I met each participant and reintroduced the study's purpose, reviewed with the participant the consent and confidentiality forms, and explained the purpose of recording the session. I told each participant that the interview would likely last up to two hours in length or until the participant fully completed his or her responses to the interview questions. I did not perform a pilot test prior to conducting the interviews. I encouraged participants to ask questions to gain clarity on any questions that might cause confusion much like what Gibbons (2015) did in a similar study. Once a participant answered all of the interview questions; I stopped the recorder.

The interviews and company documents required data analysis and coding (Sarvestani, Bufumbo, Geiger, & Sienko, 2012) to determine if common themes emerged from participants in the phenomenon under study. Borrego, Foster, and Froyd (2014) noted that researchers used conceptual frameworks to make connections and comparisons between the literature, methodology, and results of the study. I used the conceptual frameworks to guide my analysis and coding of the data collected. Using Maslow's (1943) motivation theory; Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory; and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory as conceptual framework lenses, I attempted to mitigate bias. By using Maslow, Alderfer and Vroom theories as my personal lenses, I viewed the data through

the application of these theories to understand the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. I coded, analyzed, and compared all sources of data collected with the established theories relevant to the phenomenon, similar to the methods used by Thomas (2015). I completed member checking to verify my interpreted key themes that I correlated with the literature and the conceptual frameworks.

I performed member checking by asking each participant to verify the accuracy of my interpretation of their responses to interview questions and company employee retention documents (Torrance, 2012). Member checking is a technique used by a researcher to ask the participant for feedback after all of the data is collected (Stake, 1995). Incorporating member checking can help increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Chronister, Marsiglio, Linville, & Lantrip, 2014). Participants were asked to member check my synthesized summary of their interview responses and summarized company documents pertaining to employee retention strategies. I used member checking in the study as a method to restate or summarize the information received from the study participants to ensure that what was heard was accurate, to ask for critical feedback on the findings, and to incorporate the feedback into the findings to increase the trustworthiness of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Tembo et al. (2013) noted that data saturation is the point in data collection when no new information is emerging from the collected data. Saturation of the data occurs when each additional participant provides the researcher with the same information. Data saturation is a thorough exploration and completion of data collection (Guest et al., 2006; Tembo et al., 2013). I recorded participants' responses during the interviews with



Audacity 2.06 recording software, and I took notes. I compiled interview responses and analyzed them to provide each participant a summary of the themes that emerged during the interview. Compiling a summary of themes allows study participants to verify the accuracy and meaning of their responses to use in compiling common themes among participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I compiled data throughout the study to identify themes and to determine when the data reached saturation.

### **Data Organization Technique**

Anyan (2013) and Luo (2011) proposed that implementing appropriate data organization techniques maintains the integrity of transcribed recorded interviews, audio-recorded copies of interviews, and backup copies of the recorded interviews as part of the data storage process. In the first step of the coding process, I used codes that uniquely identified the three interviewed participants by letter and number. The code letters were “P” for the participant, and the numbers were one through three. In the next step, I implemented Yin’s (2011) 5-step approach to data analysis to identify concepts or themes that were apparent in the data. In the following subsection, I provide a detailed process of each step. Davis (2013) suggested transcribing interviews in a Microsoft Word document and then uploading raw data to NVivo v10. I uploaded the interview transcripts data into NVivo v10 software and used NVivo to organize the coding for data analysis. NVivo v10 software enabled me to organize the raw data into themes identified through my literature review and conceptual framework.

Once each participant verified his or her responses to the interview questions, the transcribed data were axial coded or examined and categorized into code. I coded my

reflexive journal notes to mitigate any bias and tracked the codes in NVivo v10 software to organize the text data, code the text, manipulate the text data, and display the codes (Bergin, 2011). Da Mota Pedrosa, Näslund, and Jasmand (2012) explained the use of coding as a part of an analysis in which the researcher labels and groups data according to content. The coding process is advantageous because the researcher can identify each subject as described by the participant and group common perspectives among all participants (Da Mota Pedrosa et al., 2012; Davis, 2013; Harnish, 2012).

After the interview data collection, I filed transcripts in electronic folders on my computer to ensure they were not lost, misplaced, or altered. It is essential to maintain the transcribed recorded interviews, the audio-recorded copy of interviews, and backup copies of the recorded interviews as part of the data storage process (Anayan, 2013; Davis, 2013; Gajewski, 2013). I kept backup copies of all files and data so that if they were damaged, destroyed or lost; I would not have to replicate the entire study process again to collect new data. Davis (2013) and Gajewski (2013) suggested the use of nonpersonally identifiable labels to maintain information in the utmost confidential manner. Davis and Gajewski agreed that participants' information should not be disclosed at any time during or after completion of the study. I used one main folder and named it retention strategies and the subfolders were named P1 through P3. I used a research spreadsheet log to monitor and update data collected from each participant on the research phenomenon. Following each in-depth interview, I used the raw interview notes to transcribe the interview into narratives to elaborate on initial observations using rich descriptions of the data I received from the participants.

Gajewksi (2013), Davis (2013), and Anyan (2013) proposed the use of a master file of journal notes, company documents, and data including labeling files of the recorded and written transcripts. I created a master file of journal notes and data that included labeling files of the recorded and written transcripts. I gathered all the data material, assembled it into one electronic file, and appropriately labeled all material. I create an archival information sheet to explain any missing materials. I am the only person with access to the data files. I plan to secure files in my locked home safe and a password protected the personal computer for 5 years after the completion of the study. At the end of the 5-year period, all paper files will be shredded, and electronic files will be destroyed.

### **Data Analysis**

I used Yin's (2014) data analysis method to identify and highlight the hospitality managers' retention strategies that study participants described during the interviews. Yin's (2014) data analysis involves a researcher working with the research data to discover meaningful themes, patterns, and descriptions that answer the central research. From the interviews of hospitality managers included in my study, I analyzed the descriptions of their experiences to explore the phenomenon in a real-life setting (Yin, 2014).

After I had completed data collection and organization, I began the analysis. First, I organized the collected data into categories that I identified through the literature review. The initial categories pertaining to employee retention strategies that were used are (a) creating an employee-centered environment, (b) equating job performance to job

outcomes, (c) developing a positive relationship exchange, (d) making the job more satisfactory, (e) recruitment and selection, (f) compensation, (g) coaching opportunities, and (h) developing retention strategies. These categories are a starting point for deciding what categories currently exist in the three hospitality organizations included in this study and based on previous researchers. My data collected from the hospitality managers were the real indicator of the final categories. When a participant introduces another category, Thomas (2015) proposed establishing additional categories and review previous interviews for information that I should have included in the new category.

In addition to using categories that I derived from the findings from the literature review, I analyzed data in view of Maslow's (1943) motivation theory, Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory, and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. I used these conceptual frameworks to help me interpret the meaning of data collected. By examining retention strategies through the lens of Maslow's (1943) motivation theory; Alderfer's (1969) existence, ERG theory; and, Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory I compared the data collected with established theories relevant to the phenomenon.

Yin's 5-step approach to data analysis is used to analyze data enable researchers to analyze the textual data (Yin, 2011). Yin's (2011) process included the following 5-steps: (1) compiling the data; (2) disassembling the data; (3) reassembling the data; (4) interpreting the meaning of the data; and (5) concluding the data. In step one, I compiled the data to develop groupings. For step two, I disassembled the data to reduce and eliminate invariant themes of the phenomenon. In step three, I reassembled the data and cluster core themes. For step four, I checked patterns against the interview transcripts,

reflexive journal, and documents to interpret the meaning of the data. Finally, in step 5, I concluded or summarized the data into an individual structural description of the experiences.

In order to ensure that I did not develop a biased view of the phenomenon under study, I coded and analyzed the participant interviews and company documents pertaining to employee retention to examine if the findings from all of the multiple methods lead me to draw the same or similar conclusions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Denzin (1978) described methodological triangulation as a principle strategy using more than one method to gather data. I used methodological triangulation to analyze data collected. I reviewed transcribed recordings of the interview, reflective journal notes, and documentation to identify patterns and themes to categorize themes regarding hospitality managers' strategies for improving employee retention.

Trotter (2012) described NVivo v10 as the qualitative software used by researchers for coding thematic categories and extracting themes from a research interview to answer the research question. I used NVivo v10 software to organize the text data, code the text, manipulate the text data, and display the codes (Bergin, 2011). After the interviews, I transcribed and analyzed the data using the five-step data analysis process recommended by Yin (2011). Next, I exported the text data into NVivo v10 to correlate themes with the literature and the conceptual framework in this study. Similar to Gibbons (2015), I coded and analyzed my reflexive journal to determine if themes emerged from my experience of the phenomenon using NVivo v10 software to organize the text data, code the text, manipulate the text data, and display the codes (Bergin,

2011). I collected company documents on employee retention strategies from the participants to code and categorize the emerged themes from the documents in NVivo v10 software to organize the text data, code the text, manipulate the text data, and display the codes (Bergin, 2011).

Morse and Coulehan (2015) concluded that data collection conducted in a qualitative research study encompasses ongoing data collection and analysis simultaneously. This design fosters a process of making sense of qualitative data and requires the creation of patterns and themes from complex data (Zheng, Guo, Dong, & Owens, 2015). As noted previously, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. Bedwell, McGowan, and Lavender (2015) proposed the use of qualitative data analysis to uncover and gain insight on themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings of the phenomenon. Specifically, I focused on compiling identified retention strategies used to improve employee retention.

To make comparisons in emerged themes within each interview, Zheng et al. (2015) proposed that the researcher compare responses. I compared the answers to the interview questions to identify common themes in experiences among participants (Bedwell et al., 2015; Senden et al., 2015) by continuously examining and categorizing themes reciprocally while analyzing interview responses and company employee retention documents until the data reached saturation (Davis, 2013; Senden et al., 2015). Oberoi, Jiwa, McManus, and Hodder (2015) concluded that data saturation could be a signal to the researcher there is little need for conducting more research.

Data saturation in this study was reached when I identified sufficient information to replicate the study and the participants' and my analysis of the company employee retention documents provided redundant information (Guest et al., 2006; Senden et al., 2015). Yin (2014) argued that researchers could select at least two cases when seeking to understand and compare situations. Exploring more than two cases produced even richer study results (Yin, 2014). I included three cases in my study. I collected and sorted all research data into themes to correlate the key themes with the literature conceptual frameworks used in this study. I used member checking again during my data analysis to verify the interpretation of all the data collected from the study (Oberoi et al., 2015; Senden et al., 2015). I analyzed and interpreted the data to monitor when the data reached saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Morse & Coulehan, 2015; Senden et al., 2015).

### **Reliability and Validity**

The concepts of validity and reliability are quantitative concepts (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), which are not appropriate to use in describing qualitative research reliability and validity. Ali and Yusof (2011) recommended that researchers provide data trustworthiness in qualitative research, which includes (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). These are quality measures for qualitative research that are equivalent to reliability and validity in quantitative research (Ali & Yusof, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In addition, Yin (2014) justified the use of triangulation strategies by researchers to strengthen their qualitative case studies through the implementation of more than one data collection method.

Research credibility ensures that research findings take into account all of the complexities that present themselves in the study and explore patterns not explained (Coast & Horrocks, 2010). I established the credibility and trustworthiness of my study by the implementation of appropriate steps to maintain the highest level of academic research standards. I adhered to the strict Walden University Institutional Review Board research guidelines to mitigate bias (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). A mixture of the appropriate methods and instruments strengthens the trustworthiness of exploring employee retention through the implementation of retention strategies (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Each participant was asked to verify my summarized interpretations of their responses to determine the accuracy of the transcriptions and my interpretations of the meanings of their responses (Ben-Ari & Enosh, 2011; Dymont & O'Connell, 2011). I used member checking to verify the summarized data information gathered during data collection. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that member checking related to the accuracy of the data collected might demonstrate that an accurate picture of the phenomenon was being presented. Prior to and during the data analysis, participants were asked to verify my synthesis of their interview responses. I asked the participants to verify my synthesized interpretation of the emerged themes from their interviews and company documentation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Giving the participants an opportunity to review my synthesized interpretations of their viewpoints and company documents allowed them to ensure the accuracy of my interpretation of their perceptions regarding the strategies needed for improving employee retention.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described transferability as the trustworthiness measure



used to develop descriptive and context relevant statements that could transfer to other populations or settings. Thus, research transferability refers to the consistency in the study procedures each time a different researcher conducts the research (Donatelli & Lee, 2013). I attempted to assure the transferability of my study methods by carefully documenting and describing the entire research process. I prepared and presented a detailed description of the research process to allow another reader to transfer this process to a different research setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2011); however, transferability is left up to the reader of the research to decide (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

A researcher's focus on dependability is on ensuring the strength of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I used the same semistructured interview questions and requested each participant to provide employee retention strategy documents throughout the data collection process to enhance internal consistency. Enhancing the internal consistency of asking each participant the same set of interview questions could increase the dependability of receiving a similar answer to each question that I included in the list of interview questions. The use of a set of semistructured interview questions and requesting secondary data from each participant was a technique that I used to help assure that a sufficient amount of data was collected to identify when the data reached a point of saturation (Guest et al., 2006). Without the use of semistructured interview questions and requesting each participant to provide employee retention strategies documents, reaching saturation in the data would have been difficult (Guest et al., 2006).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described confirmability as a degree of neutrality in the

study findings shaped by the participants and the researcher's interest. I assured confirmability through member checking and the documentation of procedures for checking and rechecking the data during the data collection process. I asked participants to review my summarized interpretations of their responses to verify that I captured the intended meaning of their responses. Marshall and Rossman (2011) noted that member checking enables the researcher to share data and their interpretations with participants so that each participant may review data to ensure the integrity, trustworthiness, and accuracy of the findings. Reviewing the data for accuracy after analysis and interpretation of data can decrease the incidence of incorrect information (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The greatest benefit of the member checking was participants verified and corrected the data collected from the beginning to the end of the data analysis (Chronister et al., 2014). The participants' confirmation of my summarized interpretations of the key themes that emerged from their responses to the interview questions and company employee retention strategies documentation, which I also correlated with the literature and the conceptual framework, increased the confirmability of the study (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended that a researcher continue collecting data until no new data or information is collected to assure data saturation. I concurrently collected, analyzed, and coded the interviews and company employee retention strategy documents to identify when the data reached saturation. Data saturation in this study occurred when sufficient depth of information and redundancy of data were reached (Devlen et al., 2014; Guest et al., 2006). By systematically checking the data, I conducted

ongoing analysis of the data and confirmed the accuracy through follow up member checking. Engaging in continued referencing between data and analysis I hoped to increase the trustworthiness of a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Yin (2014) noted that the collection of multiple sources of data such as interviews, field notes and secondary data collection support triangulating evidence of the study. I established the trustworthiness of the study by using methodological triangulation. To triangulate data for a case study, Oleinik (2011) and Yin (2014) argued collecting multiple measures of the same phenomenon. I used semistructured interviews and requested company documents pertaining to employee retention strategies. In addition to collecting multiple data sources, I reported back to the participants my preliminary findings to ask for feedback on my findings to verify the accuracy of the key categories generated by my interpretation of their responses and summary of company documents pertaining to employee retention strategies to create a rich description of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, to achieve an honest examination for achieving trustworthiness I used methodological triangulation. The use of methodological triangulation increases the trustworthiness of a case study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). I submitted the proposed case study for review by a doctoral study committee including a professional methodologist to ensure a proper peer evaluation and debriefing.

### **Transition and Summary**

The topics in Section 2 included my role as the researcher, the study participants, the research method and design, the study population and sample, ethical research

practices, data collection, data analysis technique, and the dependability and credibility of the research. I explained how the qualitative case study research design applied to conduct this study and compile results. In this study, I used qualitative research methods in the form of an exploratory case study research design to explore some hospitality managers' retention strategies that have been effective in improving employee retention. I collected data implementing a self-developed interview protocol with three hospitality managers. I also included a discussion of the data collection instrument and technique, data organization techniques, and data analysis in this section. An explanation of how I established credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and methodological triangulation followed.

In Section 3, I presented the findings of this study. The findings included a detailed description of the analysis of the semistructured interview responses of the managers and the themes that emerged to answer the research question for this study. In addition, in Section 3 I included a discussion and presentation of the application of the results and findings of professional practice and implications for social change. I summarized key findings and made recommendations for further study actions. I ended Section 3 with a summary and conclusion.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In Section 3, I provided a detailed review of the data collected, the conceptual framework, and the findings related to the research question. Included in this section are an overview of the study, presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action. This section ends with recommendations for further studies, reflections on my experience, and a summary of the study conclusions.

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. Previous scholars thoroughly explored and examined employee retention (Davis, 2013; Thomas, 2015). However, the goal of this research was to study this phenomenon specifically in the context of the hospitality industry. I conducted interviews with three hospitality managers from different mid-sized hospitality organizations in Brevard County, Florida. Participants provided their real-life experiences with applying employee retention strategies in their hospitality organizations. In addition to semistructured interviews, I also reviewed company retention policies, Employee Handbooks, newsletters, and my reflective journal to triangulate and confirm interview data. I scheduled the semistructured interviews at an offsite location in a private meeting room near the three companies. Interviews did not last more than 60 minutes.

I analyzed all the data and identified 12 core emergent themes. The emergent themes showed the strategies noted in company documents and the participants' views,

experience, and perceptions regarding retention strategies to answer the central research question. Based on the research question and analysis of interview responses as well as company documents (see Appendix F), I identified four main themes: (a) the motivational outcome; (b) leadership characteristics; (c) most effective retention strategies; and (d) the least effective strategies influencing employee retention. The conceptual summary of employees' motivations were (a) personal growth and fulfillment, (b) rewards and recognition, (c) workplace relationships, and (d) performance expectations. The essential leadership characteristics for retaining hospitality employees included (a) team building, (b) empowering employees, and (c) effective communication. Effective strategies for improving hospitality employee retention were (a) promoting communication, (b) supporting employee development, and (c) recruitment and selection. The least effective strategies for improving hospitality employee retention were negotiating and compensation.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

A case study approach serves as an efficient way to investigate a phenomenon in multiple real-life settings (Cronin, 2014; Yin, 2014). The overarching research question for this study was: What strategies do hospitality managers need to improve employee retention? Three hospitality managers in mid-sized hospitality organizations were selected based on their experience with implementing employee retention strategies. Interviews with the participants took place in a setting where participants felt comfortable with providing detailed responses to each semistructured interview question (see Appendix C). In addition to semistructured interviews, Employee Handbooks and other

business records regarding retention strategies was reviewed to triangulate and confirm interview data from three cases (see Appendix F). The sample Case 1 was one participant (P1) comprised of the general manager representing company C1. The sample Case 2 was one participant (P2) comprised of assistant general manager representing company C2. The sample size for Case 3 was one participant (P3) comprised of general manager representing company C3.

I obtained company retention policies from company C1 and company C3. Hospitality managers utilize the company retention policy for employee retention, company policies, or for specific categories of records to ensure legal compliance. P1 and P3 corroborated the findings identified in their companies' retention policy. Company retention policy indicated minimum retention periods are suggested (e.g., 30 day or 90-day probationary periods) and an employee's retention period depends on the general guidelines covered in the company policy as well as any other pertinent factors. The company retention policy is not a contract between the organization and the employees.

The company C1, C2, and C3 provided copies of their 2015 Employee Handbooks. Each Employee Handbooks included a general summary description of the personnel policies, programs, and employee benefits. The Company C1 and Company C2 provided company newsletters dated June 2015. The Company C3 provided company newsletters dated March 2015 and June 2015. Company newsletters presented information on company annual property, district, and regional events at the organization. All the participants explained that the company newsletters were available for all

management and employees. Copies were available electronically, in the employee breakroom, and administrative offices (P1, P2, & P3).

I used Yin's 5-step approach (Yin, 2011) to form the basis for analysis of the data collected for this study. As reported in Section 2, I used the NVivo v10 software to input and store data for coding and exploration of themes while maintaining the confidentiality of research participants. I used member checking to check for accuracy and ensured that I captured the meaning of each participant's responses. Following the collection and analysis of data collected, I reviewed company retention documents regarding retention strategies and my reflective journal to triangulate and confirm the semistructured interview data. Twelve themes emerged from the data, which I grouped into four main themes. The four main themes were (a) the motivational outcome, (b) leadership characteristics, (c) the most effective retention strategies, and (d) the least effective strategies influencing employee retention.

The conceptual frameworks for this research were Maslow's (1943) motivation theory, Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory, and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory. Within this study, I reviewed all three frameworks as related to the study findings in order to gain a better understanding of the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. Many of the company retention documents and participant responses supported Maslow's, Alderfer's, and Vroom's motivational theories.

### **Emergent Theme One: Employee Motivations for Retaining Hospitality Employees**

The results interpreted from the conceptual summary of employees' motivations (see Table 2) were based on participants' responses to what motivational strategies they



use to retain employees. Based on the coded responses of the managers and company retention documents, I identified the motivation strategies based on Maslow's (1943) motivational theory, Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory, and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory motivation in the workplace. P2 claimed managers need to implement more than one strategy to motivate employees. Based on findings from previous research (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014), managers can not assume that employees feel valued just because they continue to be productive, nor that a strategy that motivates one employee, in terms of recognition and reward, will work for others.

Given the emergent themes from the employee motivational strategies for hospitality managers to improve employee retention (see Table 2), participants provided responses that aligned with company documents, the motivation theory, ERG theory, and expectancy theory. I summarized the coding of the participants' answers to interview questions and company employee retention strategies through company documents regarding the alignment with Maslow's (1943), Alderfer's (1969), and Vroom's (1964) theories that can lead to improved retention in the workplace. The emerged themes were (a) personal growth and fulfillment, (b) rewards and recognition, (c) workplace relationships, and (d) performance expectations, which were confirmed in previous research by Bassey (2012); Galletta, Portoghese, & Battistelli, (2011); Gill, Sharma, Mathur, and Bhutani, (2012); and Ping, Bahaudin, Mujtaba, and Whetten (2012).

Table 2

*Frequency of Employee Motivation Strategies to Improve Employee Retention*

Maslow (1943), Alderfer (1969), and Vroom (1964)	Attributes affecting employee's motivational outcomes	<i>n</i>	% of frequency of occurrence
Self-actualization need and growth	Personal growth and fulfillment	4	22.22%
Valance	Rewards and recognition	5	27.77%
Belongingness/love need and relatedness	Workplace relationships	6	33.33%
Expectancy	Performance expectations	3	16.66%

*Note: n=frequency*

**Addressing personal growth and fulfillment.** When managers apply the motivation theory by Maslow (1943) within the work environment, their management practices will entail the creation of a work environment in which employees can reach their full potential. Two study participants agreed that employees seek more from their jobs than the typical ideals of accomplishing tasks. P2 indicated, "I look for employees who are seeking out additional responsibility because they are more likely to be rewarded with greater compensation and the opportunity for better positions." A review of the C2 Employee Handbook validated P2's remarks by revealing that managers can fill organizational vacancies by promoting an employee to a vacant position. P3 proclaimed that developing an employee's ability to be responsible when working independently not only benefits P3 as a manager but also enables the employee to grow personally. DiPietro, Kline, and Nierop (2014) concluded that motivating employees and finding

opportunities for keeping them satisfied are some of the ways that managers retain employees without jeopardizing excellent customer service.

The study participants spoke of the importance of addressing the personal growth and fulfillment needs of employees who seek to grow within the organization. P1 declared, "One way for a person to develop is to further educate themselves." In a review of company documentation, I noted that companies placed a high value on education. The wages and benefits section of the C1 Employee Handbook revealed that organizational leadership could use educational reimbursements as a representation of a strategy in the company's greater retention efforts. Educational benefits are not limited to tuition reimbursement programs of current members of the company leadership team, as found in C1 company retention document (Employee Handbook, March 2015). In fact, C3 partners with specific colleges and offer tuition discounts and incentives to employees and leadership members who attend (Employee Handbook, January 2015). P3 acknowledged education is a valued commodity in the business world, and their company encourages ample opportunity for an individual to grow. Latif, Jan, and Shaheen (2013) noted that training is a means for development and an important factor in fostering a sense of advancement. In a review of the company operational documents, I noticed that C3 policy's is to promote from within whenever possible, provided the person is the best-qualified individual for the available position (Employee Handbook, January 2015). Al-sharafi and Rajiani (2013) found that realistically inspiring employees is a factor in motivation and retention, and can be accomplished if hospitality leaders notify employees of the possibilities for growth within the company.

Motivation is a force that energizes people to do what they do, and comes from either inside the employees or from their environment (Coastes, 2015; Karahanna, 2015). In the pursuit to satisfy and resatisfy needs, motivation is the driving force; for both Maslow (1943) and Alderfer's (1969) ERG theory, the pursuit occurs from a motive to act. Maslow stated a person's need produces the drive and desire that motivates an individual to satisfy that need. In a review of the all three of the companies' retention documents, I noticed that each organization strives to create an environment with policies that enhance individual and organizational forms of motivation (Employee Handbook, January 2015; Employee Handbook, March 2015; Employee Handbook, June 2014).

**Employee rewards and recognition.** In expectancy theory, Vroom (1964) stated that an extrinsic motivation links to an individual's intended outcomes. Purvis et al. (2015) concluded that expectancy theory is used to explain employee motivation, and Vroom (1964) emphasized that motivation is a multiplicative function of the personal attractiveness of the rewards that follow achievement of the organizational outcome. P2 and P3 claimed that, for some individuals, pay is the most important outcome of working. For other employees, a feeling of accomplishment is more important than pay (P2, P3). Yamamoto (2011) indicated that rewards systems add value to an employee's commitment to their organization. Therefore, employees perform in certain ways if they believe a reward will follow (Vroom, 1964).

The March 2015 and June 2015 newsletters from C1 and C3 included information regarding reward efforts on an individual and companywide basis to promote creative, energetic, and passionate locations dedicated to a high standard of excellence. All three

participants mentioned themed lunches, cultural celebrations with music and dance, and talent shows through the year to boost employee morale. The findings from all three Employee Handbooks indicated extravagant award banquets, rewards for employees in the forms of trips or cash, and spot awards recognition programs that include gifts of movie tickets, free parking for a week, gift cards, and other rewards to maintain a workplace with opportunities for workers to feel valued (Employee Handbook, January 2015; Employee Handbook, March 2015; Employee Handbook, June 2014). Kim (2014) indicated that company leaders should establish a recognition strategy to acknowledge employees for their achievement and work to promote retention.

P2 mentioned that the use of providing nonfinancial rewards or even changing the nature of the job itself. Psychological research has shown that motivation is influenced by numerous factors, including the organization's environment, organizational culture, individual characteristics, comparison across individuals, and the structure and form of existing incentives (Karahanna, 2015). In a review of all the company retention documents, C1, C2, and C3 meet employees' physiological needs need by providing break times for meals and snacks as well as adequate salary for the employees to house and feed their families. Maslow (1943) concluded that when these needs are not met employees will not focus other needs. In the Employee Handbooks, the companies mentioned providing a safe work environment with minimal job hazards and free from threats from other employees (Employee Handbook, January 2015; Employee Handbook, March 2015; Employee Handbook, June 2014). To validate Maslow's claim, Alderfer concluded employees have an existence motivational need in the workplace that include

feeling safe in the work environment (Alderfer, 1969).

**Workplace relationships.** Both P1 and P2 indicated that most employees keep working with enthusiasm as they build relationships with their management. Management plays a vital role in creating better workplace relationships and addressing employee concerns (Gayathri, Sivaraman, & Kamalambal, 2012). Reviews of the companies' retention documents confirmed P1 and P2 commented that interaction and communication with coworkers and supervisors in a team environment can increase job satisfaction and productivity (Employee Handbook, March 2015; Employee Handbook, June 2014). Panagiotakopoulos (2014) indicated that improved communication between the management team and employees improves employee relations within an organization and creates a more harmonious environment. P1 and P3 stated that their companies supported them by showing kindness beyond the work environments to build relationships. C1 and C3 June 2015 company newsletters confirmed P1 and P3 comments; managers and employees are encouraged to share organizational and personal goals to be featured in an upcoming newsletter article. The C2 Employee Handbook indicated that policies, tools, and ways of working together to make a difference in the company culture and to strengthen retention, boost associate engagement results, and loyalty to C2 (Employee Handbook, June 2014).

Maslow (1943) maintained that the basic need for belonging is a precursor for motivation and self-esteem. As noted in a review of company retention documents and company newsletters, all three companies have social building activities to increase employee motivation and engagement (Employee Handbook, June 2014; Employee

Handbook, January 2015; Employee Handbook, March 2015). P3 declared companies that are focused on business the entire time face higher turnover than those that take the time to make employees feel valued. Managers can help employees satisfy their need for belongingness, as implied by Maslow (1943), by promoting social functions such as company picnics and holiday parties.

All three company newsletters mentioned that addressing employee social needs (Maslow, 1943), and relatedness needs (Alderfer, 1969) through social interaction and teamwork. All three participants mentioned that on a daily basis they encourage teamwork and respect among coworkers. Chon et al. (2013) summarized that the hospitality industry as an industry is heavily based on dedication to a pleasant environment and friendly interaction with others. P3 mentioned that the hospitality industry is based on the personal and professional interaction between management and employees. The C1 Employee Handbook indicated that the organization strives to help the employees feel they are part of the C3 family (Employee Handbook, January 2015). All three participants proclaimed that it was impossible for their organizations to offer simplistic strategies on how to increase employees' motivation. However, all three of the companies provide management with training to address employee concerns in order to minimize an employee feeling undervalued (Employee Handbook, January 2015; Employee Handbook, March 2015; Employee Handbook, June 2014).

**Performance expectations.** According to Vroom's expectancy theory, managers can promote high levels of motivation in their environment by taking steps to ensure that performance expectations are communicated (Vroom, 1964). P2 stated employees are

motivated to produce results if they feel valued, understand where they fit in the organization, and how the job's responsibilities link to the organization's goals. As businesses change, managers must articulate their optimism regarding their vision to employees, consider individual needs, and provide meaning for employee tasks (Panagiotakopoulos, 2014). The findings of Mohsin, Lengler, and Aguzzoli (2015) explained that employees who find their job not sufficiently challenging, do not clearly understand managers' expectations, and who would like to establish potential through performance, lose interest in their jobs and are more likely to quit.

Alderfer (1969) summarized that the fulfillment of individual needs has a significant role in human motivation. In my literature review, I noted that Vroom (1964) argued that an employee is motivated under three conditions: (a) their efforts will result in acceptable performance; (b) acceptable performance will lead to the desired outcome or reward; and (c) the reward is valuable. Managers who demonstrate Vroom's expectancy theory of motivation increase the likelihood of an employee acting out the desired behavior (Jodlbauer et al., 2012). Individuals seek to satisfy their need for self-actualization needs through the desire to have the opportunity to use their skills and abilities to the fullest extent possible (Maslow, 1943).

All of the participants suggested that employees are more likely to stay longer with their employing organization when they receive ample support from management through the communication of expectations. In a review of the documents from all three companies, I noted that performance review programs are designed for (a) workforce inspiration, (b) position and conduct improvement, (c) correct directorial aims, and (d)



nurturing optimistic associations between supervision and workforce. P3 explained performance reviews are not one-sided. For example, P3 pointed out that managers use these reviews to identify areas in their organizations that require improvement with respect to employees' performance expectations. Employees seek feedback on their skills and work performance from management to increase productivity and responsiveness in meeting organizational goals (P1; McCole et al., 2012).

Nwokocha and Iheriohanma (2012) argued that employee retention is easier to achieve when employees feel proud of the job they do in the organization and when they are recognized for their job performance. Thus, in attempting to influence motivation, managers need to make sure employees feel they will succeed if they try hard (Vroom, 1964). The C3 retention documents also decreed that unrealistic goals place indirect pressure on associates to compromise the company's ethical standards.

Damij, Levnajić, Skrt, and Suklan (2015) concluded that employee motivation significantly increases productivity levels and work performance. In this study, I viewed the data through the three theories to understand the strategies that hospitality managers are using to improve employee retention in their organizations. Some of the participants implied that employee motivation is behaviorally specific, and managers need to think about specific motivational strategies to stimulate employees in a particular job rather than an individual's overall role (P2, P3). Employee motivation leads to worker development, which is essential in the hospitality industry (Galletta et al., 2011). Two participants emphasized the importance of understanding employee motivations and incorporating human motivational factors into retention strategies to improve the

effectiveness of the retention strategies (P2, P3). When managers combine motivational strategies, employee retention strategies, and real-life experiences together, managers can use employee motivation as a means for personal growth and rewards (Damij et al., 2015). All three of the companies' newsletters featured information about employees doing extraordinary things to help customers and, in some instances, their community. In addition to participants answering all questions asked during the interview, a review of company documents including an Employee Handbook revealed the organizations utilize newsletters to motivate workers to do positive things for customers and the community (Maslow, 1943; Reflective Journal, July 12, 2015).

### **Emergent Theme Two: Leadership Characteristics for Retaining Hospitality**

#### **Employees**

Shore (2013) posited that business leaders should take an interest in the implementation of essential retention strategies. P1 stated, "Management's job is to use the numerous years of hospitality experience in leadership to impact a reduction in turnover positively." A manager's ability to necessitate cordiality, as proposed by P3, leads to a more motivated worker who performs to their best and stays longer with the organization. Table 3 displays the core themes that emerged from my data analysis regarding leadership characteristics that improve the retention of hospitality employees in the three hospitality organizations included in this study.

Leadership characteristics that emerged from the data analysis include (a) team builder qualities, (b) empowering employees, and (c) effective communicator. The frequency of occurrence of core themes demonstrated the leadership characteristics in

retaining employees (see Table 3). Through company documents and participant interview responses, the findings of the study revealed the leadership practices needed for successful retention efforts, which align with previous research by Abeysekera and Jayakody (2011).

Table 3

*Frequency of Themes for Leadership Characteristics that Improve the Retention of Hospitality Employees*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>% of frequency of occurrence</i>
Team builder	4	30.76%
Empowering employees	3	23.07%
Effective communicator	6	46.15%

*Note: n=frequency*

**Team builder.** All three study participants showed a strong desire to foster cohesive team climate with their subordinates, specifically concerning building teams and creating positive work environments. P1 stated that employees enter the workplace seeking their sense of community and connection with the work environment. Dike (2012) argued that a good leader is one who leads their organization to achieve business growth through performance and teams. In the review of C1 and C3 companies' retention policies, managers are encouraged to include encouragement of employees to build cohesive working cultures where employees earn group awards, recognition, and opportunities for professional growth. Employee Handbooks noted at least one program in C1 and C2 that included a description how managers should unify their employees

through high energy, celebration, and collective intelligence for corporate teambuilding (Employee Handbook, June 2014; Employee Handbook, March 2015).

**Empowering employees.** Previous research provided clues to the needs and challenges of workplace empowerment, which warrants the need for managers to use empowerment as a retention strategy to retain employees. P1 stated that workplace empowerment has an influence on the retention of employees. Abdel-Hadi (2012) concluded that employees create self-fulfilling prophecies when they create their path to success by reflecting on their past victories. Both P2 and P3 recommended increasing opportunities for employee empowerment and development. P3 stated employees' opportunities for job enrichment play a significant role in improving retention.

Gill et al. (2012) found that employee empowerment encourages retention and strengthens an organization's operation. In addition to expressing confidence and empowering employees, P2 pointed out another way for managers to boost employee expectancy levels and motivation is by providing training to ensure that employees have all the expertise they need for high performance. In my review of the literature, I found that Russ (2011) claimed employees who do not perceive the reward outcome as something of value could leave the organization. All three company Employee Handbooks revealed that managers could recommend an employee for leadership training programs. C1 and C2 have developed programs designed for an employee with the potential to become a part of the management team and to progress within the organization (Employee Handbook, June 2014; Employee Handbook, March 2015). However, the C2 company's Employee Handbook indicated the employee must have an

undergraduate degree before applying to educational leadership programs (Employee Handbook, March 2015).

**Effective communicator.** AlBattat and Som (2013) argued that management-employee relations lead to preservation. P2 and P3 stated management plays a vital role and is a determining factor in influencing workers to stay with an organization. Quek (2011) pointed out that involvement employees in institutional goals decrease employee turnover. The findings from the C2 Employee Handbook indicated how the company vision is aimed at building and sustaining an inclusive environment where our associates are embraced and valued for who they are (Employee Handbook, June 2014).

P1 stated managers should receive as many messages as they send, pay attention to those messages received, be a good listener, and be empathetic. P2 claimed effective communication is important to meet the company goals on a daily basis. Managers must communicate with their employees when providing positive and negative reinforcement (P2). Murphy and Johnson (2011) explained that leaders, specifically authentic leaders, are intensely aware of their environment, and demonstrate determination, poise, and optimism. P1 claimed that seeking feedback from employees continued to play a critical role in the organization.

Wong and Laschinger (2013) noted that managers who emphasized transparency, balanced processing, self-awareness, and high ethical standards increased employee job satisfaction and performance. In a review of C1 retention documents, the responsibility of the hospitality organization managerial associates, officers, and directors included the expectation to set the right tone and lead by example through the creation of the right

environment. All three of the Employee Handbook documents supported the responses of both P1 and P2 by revealing that managers are encouraged to adopt open door policies for the benefit of communicating openly with associates (Employee Handbook, June 2014; Employee Handbook, March 2015).

### **Emergent Theme Three: Effective Strategies for Improving Hospitality Employee Retention**

In the third theme, participants and company retention documents emphasized effective strategies for retaining employees. Ezulike (2012) argued that as a human relations best practice, each organization has their set of effective retention policies in place to address rewards and recognition, employee development, and compensation. The Employee Handbook and newsletter from March 2015 indicated how management at C3 believes the wellbeing of their employees are fundamental to the success of their business because employees are the ones who provide hospitality to their guests each day. The demand for retaining employees makes having effective retention strategies in place more of a need than a desire for businesses (Thomas, 2015). All of the participants revealed promoting communication between the managers and the employees, supporting employee professional development, and strategic planning for employee retention during hiring and recruitment of new employees were effective.

One of the hospitality managers, P3, opined, “A manager's retention strategy that goes beyond compensation can be employed to retain employees and are sometimes just as effective as compensation.” P2 claimed, “Employee engagement, communication, and inclusion are some examples of approaches that I have implemented when developing

retention strategies.” Findings from this study indicated that the most effective strategies are: (a) communication, which aligned with research by Iyer and Israel (2012); (b) supporting employee development as argued by Latukha (2011); and (c) screening during the selection and recruitment process as found by Johnson (2014).

Table 4 displays the core themes that emerged from the data analysis regarding the most effective strategies that improve the retention of hospitality employees in the three hospitality organizations included in this study. Retention strategies that emerged from the data analysis include (a) communication, (b) supporting employee development, and (c) recruiting and selecting the best employees for an organization. The frequency of occurrence of core themes demonstrated the most effective strategies for retaining employees (see Table 4). Thus, the findings from this study align with previous research on employee retention.

Table 4

*Frequency of Themes for Effective Strategies for Improving Hospitality Employee Retention*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>% of frequency of occurrence</i>
Promoting communication	5	38.46%
Supporting employee development	5	38.46%
Recruitment and selection	3	23.07%

*Note: n=frequency*

**Recruitment.** Most companies provide their management with policy manuals and Handbooks that strictly define legal hiring practices as well as consistent policies and processes for boosting employee retention (Deery & Jago, 2015; Valetine, 2011). P3

stated that company management training and manuals provided managers with hypothetical circumstances with carefully written rules, policies, and practices when interviewing and terminating employees. Inadequacies in the workplace have accelerated the rate of employee turnover (Das, 2012). Hamnett and Bake (2012) claimed, if managers become more selective during the employee recruitment process, companies will not change jobs as often, which will create stable workforces.

Participants agreed that employee turnover is expensive, but if managers are proactive during the hiring interview, they will minimize turnover (P2, P3). To have an extremely motivated team and appeal to prospective employees, Maslow (1943), Alderfer (1969), and Vroom (1964) proposed that managers should take steps to ensure that employees' motivation needs are being met. Johnson's (2014) findings indicated that managers needed to recruit and select the right person to boost retention within a business organization. P2 proclaimed their relationship with subordinates could positively or negatively affect recruitment and retention efforts in multiple ways. C3 frequently scans their workforce through exit interviews to evaluate recruiting and retention practices to improve employee retention (Employee Handbook, January 2015).

**Promoting communication.** Adopting an approach from Maslow (1943) and Alderfer (1969) enables managers to satisfy employee relatedness needs by promoting good interpersonal relations and by providing accurate feedback. The basic tenet, as P1 and P3 noted, is that management should work on the principle that a leader can prove their legitimacy by developing sincere relationships with their subordinates and giving importance to their input. Managers that encourage an operation culture that involves or



grants employee decision-making leverage can see increases in employee retention within a business organization (Keeling, McGoldrick, & Sadhu, 2013).

Research summarized in the literature review provided practical measures to improve employee retention through the promotion of managers communicating with employee and building relationships. Abdullah and Antony (2012) posited that leaders should share information, especially in an industry where workers tend to have a certain level of perception about the leadership. P2 proclaimed that 85% of his day is spent communicating with employees, so they know where we are in terms of achieving the team goals. In a review of the C2 Employee Handbook, I triangulated with the interview data by noting that communication with employees promotes motivation by advising and clarifying to employees about the task to be done (Employee Handbook, June 2014). C1 and C2 Employee Handbooks suggested that managers should communicate with employees on a continuous basis to provide employees with performance feedback and how to improve their performance if it is insufficient (Employee Handbook, June 2014; Employee Handbook March 2015).

**Supporting employee development.** Employee growth needs relate to their need for self-development (Alderfer, 1969; Maslow, 1943). When managers allow workers to improve their skills and abilities continuously through the engagement of supporting meaningful work, their growth needs are being met (Alderfer, 1969). C1, C2, and C3 newsletters indicated how their companies' workplace atmosphere is dedicated to raising hospitality to a new level (Company newsletters, June 2015). Maslow (1943) indicated that effective managers support and inspire employees to help motivate those employees

to achieve their desired wishes.

P3 stated that on many occasions employees express their desire to grow beyond the position for which they were hired to fill. P1 stated employees are encouraged to consider job-enriching opportunities to meet personal goals during the employee evaluation. Retaining employees requires more than motivation; employee retention necessitates management adaptation to seek opportunities to help employees reach their aspirations for growth (Latukha, 2011). P3 commented, "As the manager, I try extremely hard to acknowledge the hard work that my employees devote to C3 Company." P1 and P3 claimed that employee development opportunities allow employees to showcase skills and existing knowledge. The C1 Employee Handbook indicated C1 created work environments where employees can achieve their full potential and, in doing so, directly impact the growth and success of the hotel. Developmental opportunities presented to employees can be of great value to employees who seek to grow professionally within an organization (Kandampully et al., 2014). P1 suggested that by using employee developmental opportunities establishes a stronger management-employee relationship. Galletta et al. (2011) indicated that an employee's personal motivation leads to their ability development, which is essential in the hospitality industry.

C1 and C3 company retention policies proposed that meeting employees' needs and motivations are taken seriously because they affect the internal work environment. P2 and P3 mentioned that when they noticed an employee who seems unmotivated, they took immediate action to implement strategies to ignite the motivation in those workers. C2 Employee Handbook (June 2014) and the retention policy from C3 validated these

strategies. In fact, the C3 retention policy emphasized that managers use retention strategies outside of offering a financial reward but instead utilize individual factors such as personality, skills, knowledge, experience, and individual abilities. Vroom (1964) concluded that effort, performance, and motivation are linked in a person's motivation effort.

#### **Emergent Theme Four: Least Effective Strategies for Improving Hospitality**

##### **Employee Retention.**

Retaining and motivating employees are significant factors within any organization (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). P2 and P3 proclaimed counterproductive retention strategies occur at some point in hospitality managers' careers. Table 5 displays the core themes that emerged from the data analysis regarding employee retention strategies that were least effective for improving the retention of hospitality employees in the three hospitality organizations included in this study. Retention strategies that emerged from the data analysis included negotiation and compensation. The frequency of occurrence of core themes demonstrated these two strategies were the least effective for employee retention.

Table 5

##### *Frequency of Themes Least Effective Strategies for Improving the Retention of Hospitality Employees*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>% of frequency of occurrence</i>
Negotiating	2	50%
Compensation	2	50%

*Note: n=frequency*

**Negotiation.** One retention strategy that some managers use in situations where the desired outcome is for both parties to win is a negotiation (Whyman & Petrescu, 2014; Wieseke, Alavi, & Habel, 2014). Tavitiyaman et al. (2012) found that evidence that effective employee retention strategies and aligned organizational structure can explain positive hospitality organization performance. P1 specified that negotiating with employees is not effective in retaining employees. "The hospitality industry is competitive, and managers constantly seek ways to embrace the change industry demands and employee turnover without compromising our brand quality," proclaimed P3. The workplace environment should consist of employees who fully embrace change (Hamnett & Baker, 2012). P1 and P3 indicated that negotiating with employees has a negative effect on employee retention. Based on a review of the all the company retention documentation, no information validated the P1 and P3 claim regarding negotiating practices with employees nor the use of negotiation as a retention strategy. In my reflexive journal, I noted managers must understand why their employees are leaving and take corrective actions to increase retention without compromising the operational productivity goals (Reflexive Journal, July 2015).

**Compensation.** Torres and Alder (2012) proposed that companies developed compensation strategies beyond tangible rewards such as pay to align with the business strategy. P2 and P3 suggested offering employee's more money is not always an option. To influence employee retention, managers attempt to encourage workers to perform at a higher level and be more satisfied with their work. Compensation such as flexible schedules and professional development courses are valuable to some employees (P2). P3

stated, “Offering a flexible schedule has worked in the past when I could not provide an employee more money.”

While compensation was used to solve numerous retention strategies in the past as proposed by P2, it is no longer as effective as it once was (P2, P3). Abii et al. (2013) also claimed that compensation is not the only factor in retaining employees. All of the participants agreed that compensation was a small part of a larger negotiation process for some employees striving to fulfill their self-actualization needs. In a review of all three of the companies’ retention documents, I noted the utilization of employee discounts could be a form of compensation as a form of compensation (Employee Handbook, March 2015). Employee discounts for the friends and family stay program at participating properties was a strategy used to entice employee interest by getting them consider the discount based on compensation value (Company Newsletter, June 2015). Furthermore, Ezulika (2012) stated individuals would take a decrease in pay for flexible working hours. Based on the literature review, compensation could have adverse influences on employee retention if compensation is not a motivation of an employee (Gupta & Shaw, 2014). In my reflexive journal, I noted that letting employees know they are appreciated and their efforts are noticed builds a bond of trust and respect that enhances enhancing loyalty, commitment, and engagement, which outweighs compensation in some instances (Reflective Journal Entry, January 2015).

P2 and P3 agreed that compensation could be one motivating factor. P3 proposed that offering training to make employees eligible for promotion was a valid retention strategy. According to Vroom’s (1964) research, the association between performance

and outcomes, such as pay must be high for motivation to be high. Having an understanding of the effectiveness of a strategy may contribute toward the implementation of a more effective strategy instead of a less effective strategy for improving employee retention. Cardy and Legnick-Hall (2011) found that a manager's employee retention strategies could influence an employee's desire to stay with the organization for a longer period. In a review of all the company retention documents, I found nothing that validated the participants' claim that compensation was a least effective retention strategy.

### **Summary**

In general, the research findings included association with the purpose, significance of the study, the review of the literature, and the conceptual frameworks. The themes, shown in Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6, provided strategies that managers can use to help improve employee retention in their hospitality organizations. The principals of employee retention require business leaders to promote organizational policies and practices that encourage workers to remain with the organization (James & Mathew, 2012; Ratna & Chawla, 2012). The participants' responses and the companies' employee retention documents helped me to understand the research phenomenon and determine the relative effectiveness of strategies managers need to improve employee retention. Ping et al. (2012) pointed out that whatever strategic approach hospitality leaders take to solve organization challenges should include improvements to increase employee retention.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies

hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. Based on the research question and analysis of interview responses as well as company documents, I identified four main themes: (a) the motivational outcome; (b) leadership characteristics; (c) most effective retention strategies; and (d) the least effective strategies influencing employee retention. The findings from this study support the idea that Maslow's (1943), Alderfer's (1969), and Vroom's (1964) theories are important theories for guiding the development of employee retention strategies for managers in the hospitality industry. Hospitality manager and their organizations used intrinsic and extrinsic motivational drivers essential to improving employee retention in their organization (Shore, 2013). Based on the finding from this research, I found that not all hospitality organizations attract similarly motivated employees nor lead to the equivalent retention outcome. Managers understanding of what motivates or fails to motivate employees can result in effective retention employee strategies (Caruthers, 2011). Understanding strategies that improve employee retention can lead to the establishment of an engaging and satisfying work environment (Belbin, Erwee, & Wiesner, 2012; Houlfort et al., 2015). Members of management need to monitor the main reasons employees leave a business and analyze why an individual may have resigned from their role, which may provide valuable feedback to improve employee retention. Developing an understanding of what strategies improve employee retention is one of the leading challenges that plague organizational leaders in the competitive business industry (Meléndez, Borges-Mendez, Visser, & Rosofsky, 2015).

Organizational leaders in the 21st century need to implement retention strategies

to manage employee retention and attract quality employees into the organization (Bassey, 2012; Morley, Scullion, Collings, & Schuler, 2015). Organizations that lack qualified workers that are good at their assigned jobs find their organization in serious trouble (Winkler, Busch, Clasen, & Vowinkel, 2015).

Jennex (2014) argued that the cost of replacing knowledgeable workers can reach up to 100% of that employee's annual salary. In the end, the retention of existing employees represents a significant opportunity for saving businesses operating costs (Jennex, 2014). Uncertainty associated with which employee retention strategies are the most effective because of changing consumer demand is one of the major challenges some managers face (Wiesek et al., 2014). The incurred cost of losing an employee is dependent on the demand for a skilled employee in the workplace (Bilau, Ajagbe, Sholanke, & Sani, 2015). Other costs related to the loss of employees include advertising and recruiting expenses, orientation, training of the new employees, and decreased productivity until new employees become trained (Zopiatis, Constanti, & Theocharous, 2014). These are reasons why the retention of employees is imperative to some businesses. Once a manager hires talented employees, retention of those qualified employees is important to maintain a reasonable return on investment (Campbell, Ganco, Franco, & Agarwal, 2012; Shacklock & Brunetto, 2012).

Employee retention remains low in the hospitality industry resulting in one of the most problematic management topics among manager in the industry (Kim, 2014). Brown, Thomas, and Bosselman (2015) noted that this outcome is because of the relative ease for entry-level employees to obtain similar jobs with competitive organizations, as



jobs are often highly substitutable in terms of compensation, working conditions, and location. Managers who implemented retention strategies to improve employee retention and attract quality employees in their organizations include awareness of the need to develop a skill for listening, respecting, and understanding their employees' concerns (Twigg & McCullough, 2014). Employee departures from an organization are inevitable (Shipp, Furst-Holloway, Harris, & Rosen, 2014; Zopiatis et al., 2014). However, managers having a planned employee retention strategy in place mitigates the intention of an employee to leave an organization as well as the costs associated with that departure (Deery & Jago, 2015).

### **Implications for Social Change**

Business organizations differ based on services, products, and sizes. Those differences often distinguish individual businesses from their competitors. However, one factor common to most business organizations is their success is highly reliant on the skills, knowledge, and experience of their employees (Kinnie & Swart, 2012). Business leaders and stakeholders could utilize the finding of this study to develop an increased understanding of effectively developing and implementing retention strategies needed to retain employees in all sectors of the hospitality industry.

Improving employee retention is more than retaining talent or providing an occasional reward or a nomination for an employee of the month award (Kinnie & Swart, 2012). Business leaders who believe there is no longer relevant cause for concern regarding the impact of employee retention often miss the deeper implications of employee retention and lack an understanding of how retaining employees is a beneficial

contribution to the stability of the economy. Increasing the retention of employees is complex. According to Stirpe et al. (2014), many times business leaders lack an understanding of how employee retention can negatively influence their organization's productivity and profit margins.

Considering the three theories of motivation discussed in this study together can help managers gain a rich understanding of the many challenges involved in motivating employees to remain with their organizations. Managers who examine the importance of motivation theory, expectancy theory, and motivational needs theories can gain a better insight regarding how to effectively motivate employees. The theories are complementary in that each focuses on a somewhat different aspect of motivation. Organizational leaders need to understand the motivation, what employees want from their jobs, and why leaders need to address the needs of the employees to remain effective and achieve company goals.

Implications for positive social change include the use of management implemented strategic retention strategies to improve organizational responsiveness and employee morale. The use of effective retention strategies may lead to (a) a decline in employee retention challenges; (b) a stabilized workforce; (c) improvements in services offered to customers; (d) an increase in employee morale; and (e) organizational and economic amplification. Practical implications are that business leaders can use this study to continue working toward the development of effective strategies for employee retention. The development of retention strategies can lead to policies and practices within their organization to improve employee retention, manager-employee working

relations, and subsequently increase employee motivation, loyalty, and commitment. Social implications are effective employee retention strategies can increase a corporation's image among their current and prospective workers as well as numerous other stakeholders within the community where the organization contributes to the local economy.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Researchers have completed a plethora of studies on the topic of employee retention strategies (Mitchell et al., 2014). The continuous growth of the hospitality industry in Florida since 2008 stimulated business leaders to focus on a more employee-centered work environment to increase the retention of their employees. Employee retention is moderate in hospitality organizations in Brevard County, Florida. Experienced employees have a small number of opportunities to choose for employment, which stimulates each organization to compete with the others in continuously developing retention strategies to retain their workforce and to attract qualified prospective employees. The findings from this study are important to hospitality managers, HR managers, business leaders, and management professionals. The application of effective employee retention strategies may assist managers in successfully retaining employees and sustaining profitability.

Business leaders should view employee retention as a serious problem and implement proactive measures to improve retention by involving managers who have experience in developing effective employee retention strategies. Forums or professional conferences are ideal opportunities for hospitality managers to provide feedback openly.

Hospitality managers can provide feedback on various industry issues such as how low employee retention can threaten or influence an organization's performance.

The basis for developing retention strategies is sometimes the outcome. The aim of most managers is to increase productivity and efficiency to reach maximum results for the organization. Hospitality management professionals should consider the results of this study to design retention strategies and improve employee retention in their organizations. Furthermore, the changing U.S. economy, as well as the supply of and demand for workers necessitate reviews of existing retention strategies by managers and the adoption of new initiatives that are based on the results of this study.

Periodically monitoring and tracking employee retention strategies of an organization and its competitors can be useful in planning and implementing effective employee retention strategies. The business leader who understands employee motivation can plan proactive measures towards developing and implementing effective employee retention strategies. Business leaders can disseminate employee surveys and conduct exit interviews with departing employees to develop a better understanding of the changing expectations of their employees over time.

I will share my study findings with other business professionals through scholarly journals and other business publications. Also, I will share the findings through seminars and training courses on employee retention strategies. My focus will be on helping organization leaders improve employee retention in their organizations.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Employee retention is a phenomenon that continues to affect multiple industries.

Exploring strategies that hospitality managers need to improve employee retention led to the identification of several emerging themes that warrant further study. The themes identified may help industry leaders develop strategies to improve employee retention in the workplace and reduce the associated loss of customer satisfaction, employee productivity, and organization profitability. Workers have more needs that motivate them than those described by Maslow (1943), Alderfer (1969), and Vroom (1964). Researchers can investigate the three themes identified in this study. These include (a) factors influencing employee turnover, (b) HR management recruiting strategies aimed at identifying highly qualified candidates, and (c) the influence of leadership styles on a multigenerational workforce.

Additionally, researchers should conduct further studies to explore employee retention strategies not identified or covered in this study, which should help to address the limitations identified in this study. The retention strategies identified in this study merit investigation from the viewpoints of employees. Furthermore, since this study focused on the area of Brevard County, Florida, I recommend further research on the retention strategies used by hospitality managers in other geographic locations using a larger study population.

### **Reflections**

The Walden University Doctor Business Administration (DBA) Program has been an interesting and rewarding experience. At the beginning of my matriculation in the program, I was very enthusiastic to embark on a new challenge. I met some great colleagues and professors within a short time who have remained with me through the

end of my research journey. However, as time progressed in the development of my study, I often felt overwhelmed and dispirited. The encouragement of colleagues, mentors, and my chair, and the many program directors helped me to remain engaged in my studies. Finding a group of colleagues who had the same amount of drive aided me in overcoming the feeling of being overwhelmed and frustrated.

The phenomenon of employee retention is a personal and professional interest of mine since I finished my undergraduate studies. I have an active interest in the subject. In my study process, I researched top challenges in the business industry, and employee retention was among those on the list. From my review of the academic and professional literature, I began to focus my interest on information that related to employee retention, employee turnover, and employee retention strategies.

At the beginning of my study, I wanted to explore real-life experiences regarding employee retention. The original topic was strategies for retaining top-performing employees in the hospitality industry; however, effective employee retention strategies implemented by managers became clearer through a narrower research approach. I changed the title of my research to *Strategies for Retaining Employees in the Hospitality Industry*. I chose a qualitative multiple case study research design to compare the retention strategies some managers are using to improve employee retention in a constantly changing workforce. The three study participants provided key insights into employee retention strategies, which answered my personal and study research question.

The findings of this study affect me personally as a small to midsize business consultant professional. As a business consultant, I am aware of the dissimilar

perspectives that managers and subordinates have on the subject of employee retention strategies and how a lack of employee motivation negatively affects an operation's productivity. Effective managers, such as those interviewed, tend to follow many motivational guidelines to retain employees, whereas ineffective managers often fail to follow them and seem to have difficulty motivating and retaining employees.

Although differences existed in the participants' perspectives, I identified many similarities that all faced as they searched for ways to improve employee retention. The findings of the study were similar to my experiences in attempting to create, improve, and change employee retention strategies in many of my clients' businesses. While some of the study participants use similar strategies, there were also some differences. As a result, the findings from this study could be used by business professionals to understand employee retention strategies that motivate employees without compromising operational efficiency.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

Hospitality organizations need to consider employee motivation to improve retention; employees tend to stay where they feel welcome (Belbin et al., 2012). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to answer the central research question, what strategies do hospitality managers need to improve employee retention. As such, managers create environments that may either encourage or inhibit an employee's desire to remain within an organization (Tsai, Horng, Liu, & Hu, 2015). Management must use the proper incentives to achieve the desired results of improving employee retention in their organizations (Karahanna, 2015). The success of an organization

depends on improving retention, which an organization achieves by implementing motivational theories such as those by Maslow (1943), Alderfer (1969), and Vroom (1964). Each of the theories of motivation discussed in this study focused on one or more issues that managers need to address to motivate their employees. Together these theories provide a comprehensive set of guidelines for managers to follow to improve employee retention in their organizations.

Although limited to a narrow set of retention strategies, the results of the study include findings that such strategies have the potential to influence the satisfaction of the employee's motivation. Employee motivation is critical for achieving desired organizational level outcomes of employee retention initiatives (Belbin et al., 2012). The study participants and the documents of the companies demonstrated the importance of carefully considering employee motivations during the design of retention strategies.

The importance of retention strategies among business process configurations was highlighted in this study. An additional contribution of this study is the illustration of how employee retention strategies can influence specific business procedures used to gain insight into the motivational effects of some commonly implemented retention strategies. Also, the study approach provides a foundation for many organizations already using several of the strategies identified, but may be lacking, deficient, or uncertain regarding which strategies improve their employee retention. Knowledge regarding which employee retention strategies are effective is critical to the overall success of an employee retention plan (Ping et al., 2012).



In conclusion, improving employee retention is among the priorities for businesses. These initiatives may influence the motivation of organizational members. Employee development is not just the responsibility of the employee. Kachalla (2014) stated that after 50 years of research employee motivation continues to be one of the problems and challenges facing organizations. Organizations continually seek new solutions to assess, understand, and strategize employee retention (Supanti, Butcher, & Fredline, 2015).

Keeping employees motivated is the key to a successful and productive workforce (Bassey, 2012). Managers must find ways to understand what drives employees within the context of their role in the organization (Elloy, 2012). Retention strategies are designed in such a way that the employees' motivations are an investment in their worth and contribute to powerful incentives to remain with the organization.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form

### **Strategies for Retaining Employees in the Hospitality Industry**

You are invited to participate in a research study regarding strategies for retaining employees in the hospitality industry. The researcher is inviting participation by managers with having a minimum of 5 years leadership experience, who are at least 18 years of age with a bachelor's degree, and experience implementing employee retention strategies. This form is part of a process for "informed consent" to provide you information about the study and what your participation will entail.

Melvia Scott, a researcher and doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Business Administration Program at Walden University, is conducting this exploratory multiple case study.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies hospitality managers need to improve employee retention.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Voluntarily participate in an interview of no more than two hours regarding employee turnover and retention.
- The interview will be audiotaped to ensure the accuracy of the data collected.
- Verify the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations of your real-life experiences in implementing strategies for retaining employees.

Below are the main questions that you will be asked during the interview.

1. What retention strategies have you used to retain employees in your hospitality organization?
2. What employee motivational factors and leadership characteristics do you use to retain employees in your hospitality organization?
3. Which of these strategies have you implemented to retain employees in your organization?
4. Which of these strategies helped to improve employee retention?
5. Which of these strategies did not help to improve employee retention?

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to participate in the study. Forty-eight hours prior to the interview I contact you to explain the study. I will allow you to ask questions before deciding to take part in the research. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to participate in the study. The interview will be no more than two hours in length. If you decide to participate in the study, you can withdraw at any time, even after the interview has been completed.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:** Participation in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as stress or becoming upset. Your participation in this study will not pose a risk to your safety or well-being. The study could potentially benefit hospitality organizations by providing information that may improve employee retention.

**Payment:** No incentive will be offered for voluntarily participating in the study.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. In addition, your name or any other information that could identify you in the study will not be disclosed to anyone. Data will be kept secure in electronic files that will only be accessible to the researcher, and will be retained for a period of at least 5 years as required by Walden University. At the end of 5 years, all electronic files will be erased, and all printed material containing data and identifying information on study participants will be shredded.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at [melvia.scott@waldenu.edu](mailto:melvia.scott@waldenu.edu) or 386-846-1339. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott at 1-800-925-3368, extension 3121210. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Walden University's approval number for this study is **07-27-15-0449573**, and it expires on **July 26, 2016**.

You will be provided a copy of this consent form to retain for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement.

I understand that I agree to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

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## Appendix B: Recruitment Letter for Study Participants

RE: A RESEARCH STUDY THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

Dear [Name]:

My name is Melvia Scott, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in Business Administration - Leadership at Walden University. I am conducting research on retention strategies that hospitality manager's implement to retain their employees. The study is entitled: "Strategies for Retaining Hospitality Employees: A Multiple-Case Study." I am in conducting this study to explore some hospitality managers' effective retention strategies for reducing turnover among their employees.

I am seeking face-to-face interviews with hospitality managers who meet the following criteria:

- Managers must have a minimum 5 years of managerial experience.
- Managers must have at minimum a bachelor's degree.
- Managers must have experience implementing employee retention strategies.
- Managers must be at least 18 years of age.
- Managers must be currently employed at a hospitality organization within Brevard County, Florida.

I developed the study selection criteria to assure that study participants are likely to possess knowledge and information that are relevant to the purpose of this study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time, even after I have completed data collection for the study. I will protect your identity, and your individual responses to interview questions will not be published or disclosed. All of your individual responses to questions will be recorded for analysis and reported in the study with no information that identifies you or your organization. However, I will be asking for an organizational representative to share company documents and regarding employee retention strategies. At that time, I will disclose that you are participating in my study. I will share the findings from the study with study participants, other scholars, and the leaders within the each participant's organization.

I am requesting that you participate in my study. Please call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx if you are interested in participating. I will also contact you within the next 10 days to answer any questions that you may have and to ask for your participation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Melvia E. Scott  
Doctoral Candidate  
Doctor of Business Administration Program  
Walden University

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

## Interview Questions:

1. What employee motivational factors and leadership characteristics do you use to retain employees in your hospitality organization?

Follow up question: What are some of the reasons these motivational factors and leadership characteristics apply to retaining employees in the hospitality organization?

2. What strategies have you used to retain employees in the hospitality organization?
3. Which of these strategies have you implemented to retain employees in the organization?
4. Which of these strategies helped to improve employee retention?

Follow up question: Why do these strategies help to improve employee retention?

5. Which of these strategies did not help to improve employee retention?

Follow up question: Why did these strategies not improve employee retention?

#### Appendix D: Interview Protocol

The interview protocol will consist of the following six steps:

1. an opening statement;
2. semistructured interview questioning;
3. probing questions;
4. participants verifying themes noted during the interview;
5. corrections to themes if noted by the participants; and
6. a recording of reflexive notes.



## Appendix E: Consent and Document Release Form

RE: TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FOR DOCUMENTS/ TO BE RELEASED

Dear Organization Representative:

I am a student at Walden University pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration degree. The title of my doctoral study is “Strategies for Retaining Employees in the Hospitality Industry.” A management professional from your organization has agreed to participate in my doctoral study on employee retention strategies. I am requesting your permission to use and reproduce employee retention documents from your company that are related to my study. As the official with the authority to grant permission to release company documents, I am requesting release of documents subject to the following conditions:

- I will use all company documents released to me exclusively for my research and not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
- I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as authorized by you as the official company representative.
- I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant’s name is not used.
- I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
- I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue in perpetuity after the completion of my study.
- I understand that any violation of this agreement may have legal implications.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and that I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature:

Date:

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I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name), in my official capacity as \_\_\_\_\_  
 (title) of \_\_\_\_\_ (company), hereby release the documents listed by  
 title below to Melvia E. Scott for her sole and exclusive use in her Doctor of Business  
 Administration research study at Walden University subject to the above agreement  
 signed by Ms. Scott.

Signed this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ (month), 2015

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Title)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Organization)

**Documents released for use by Melvia E. Scott**

**Company Employee Retention Policy**

**Company Retention Strategies**

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please print and sign your name, title, the name of the organization, date your signature, and list the titles of the documents you are releasing for my use.

Sincerely,

Melvia E. Scott  
 Doctoral Candidate  
 Doctor of Business Administration Program  
 Walden University

## Appendix F: Description of Reviewed Case Study Documents

*Description of Reviewed Case Study Documents*

Document identification	Description	<i>n</i>
Document 1	Company retention policy	2
Document 2	Employee handbook	3
Document 3	Company newsletter	4

*Note: n=quantity*