

2016

# Human Capital Development Strategies for the Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure Industry

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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2016

Abstract

Human Capital Development Strategies for the Tourism, Hospitality, and Leisure

Industry

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2016

## Abstract

A shortage of skilled labor could cost the tourism, hospitality, and leisure industry (THL) a loss of \$610 billion and 14 million jobs by 2024. The literature contains the contributions of specialist THL institutions but not that of the industry leaders to ameliorating this human capital (HC) challenge. The purpose of this multicase study was to explore the HC productivity strategies used by THL business leaders in Nigeria that improved employee productivity despite the lack of specialist THL institutions. The human capital theory (HCT) was the conceptual framework of the study. Coding of data derived from semistructured interviews with 3 THL industry leaders followed the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Triangulation of the interview data, site observations and company documents resulted in 5 strategy themes. The study indicated that recruiting persons with essential social capital, inducting them into high ethical standards, providing in-house training, motivating with reward and recognition, and adoption of affordable technologies are key industry strategies for THL HC development. The study findings can be adopted into THL organizations human resource management strategies and as input for training managers in the THL industry. The results of this study may contribute to social change by keeping more people gainfully engaged, increasing the dignity and prosperity of THL employees and their families, and reducing the undesirable effects of unemployment such as the high crime rate in southern Nigeria.

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## Dedication

I gladly dedicate this study to my spouse, Victoria Adeola and my three daughters, Gladys Oluwawapelumi, God's Glory Oluwaferanmi, and God's Grace Oluwatofunmi. You bore my frequent retreat to study and supported me all the way. I would not have completed this journey without your love and understanding. God bless you.

## Acknowledgments

I sincerely acknowledge everyone that supported me while I completed this study. I appreciate my doctoral committee and wish to recognize the invaluable support of my chair, Dr. Matthew Knight from the first contact we had on the phone until date, Dr. Kevin Davies, and Dr. Julie Ducharme for their guidance. I must mention the contribution of Dr. Rocky Dwyer whose painstaking reviews in DDBA8991 steered me early in the right direction.

I appreciate my relations in the States, Dn. Johnson and Mrs. Juliana Amao, Mr. Joel & Mrs. Lydia Amao, Dn. Olusola and Mrs. Victoria Alamu, and Pastor Michael Segun and Mrs. Olanike David for playing host to my family whenever we visited. Without the support of these persons, I would not have been successful. Thank you.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

An important factor of productivity is the human capital (HC). The enactment of a business opportunity and the cognitive conception of its day-to-day operations require astute management and a dexterous, productive frontline of employees. A competent workforce is imperative because of customers' demands and other dynamic market forces (citation). While business owners and shareholders are often conscious to recruit competent managerial staff, the competence of the customer service personnel, such as those of the tourism, hospitality, and leisure (THL) industry, often received a lesser attention (Kim & Park, 2014; Lopes & Teixeira, 2013). Investors in a human-intensive and people-focused industry such as the THL should require of top management that the front-line customer-service personnel are adequately trained to deliver quality services and high productivity.

### **Background of the Problem**

Financial performance in business is intricately dependent on the productivity of the people in the organization (citation). The THL industry forecast shows that the US\$7 trillion industry accounts for 9.5% global gross domestic product (GDP) and employs 266 million people (citation). However, the industry could to lose about 14 million jobs and \$610 billion GDP by 2024 because of skill shortage (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2015; World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2015b). Skilled HC has become a strategic theme and needed in the THL industry. The THL industry lacks in structured employee competency development programs for customer service personnel (Kim & Park, 2014; Lopes & Teixeira, 2013). The THL industry typically has high employee turnover (Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013) and below average attraction for

potential employees (Wang & Huang, 2014). Leaders of some THL organizations need strategic human resource management (HRM) practices to improve corporate financial performance while enhancing employee productivity and averting a future loss of labor.

Highly effective HC is essential to productivity (Luckstead, Choi, Devadoss, & Mittelhammer, 2014). Prior authors' works underscore the importance of human capital development (HCD) to productivity and business performance (Anca-Ioana, 2013; Darwish, Singh, & Mohamed, 2013). The authors also emphasized the need to conduct further studies on HCD in nonWestern economies, especially the predominantly unskilled subSaharan Africa (Anca-Ioana, 2013; Danquah & Ouattara, 2014). The focus of this study was the THL industry. The industry is strategic to job creation, to poverty alleviation, and to the development of subSaharan Africa countries (Chun-Ming, Cheng-Yih, & Jian-Fa, 2014; Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013; WTTC, 2015a). Jakada and Gambo (2014) also recommended that the Nigerian hotel industry should pay appropriate attention to internal capabilities to respond to, and to meet market needs. Based on these calls, exploring the strategies THL leaders in Nigeria use to improve productivity and to retain the HC in the industry, is imperative. Discovering the strategies shifts the focus of the study to what the problem statement is.

### **Problem Statement**

The global THL industry position will decline by 14 million jobs and US\$610 billion GDP by 2024 due to a deficit of skilled HC (WTTC, 2015b). Developing HC yields a 13% internal rate of return and contributed up to 61.5% of U.S. productivity from 1952 to 2000 (Lopes & Teixeira, 2013; Luckstead et al., 2014). The general business problem is that leaders of the THL industry have not sufficiently developed employee HC

to address upcoming skill shortage. The specific business problem is that some THL managers lack strategies to improve HC productivity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore HC productivity strategies used by THL business leaders in Nigeria that have improved employee productivity. The data from this study may contribute to social change by providing a framework for THL leaders in southern Nigeria to invest in developing future leaders of the industry. As a result, the career prospects and social status of the employees might improve; the employee turnover rate and the attendant losses of Africa's fourth employer of labor (WTTC, 2015a) might reduce.

### **Nature of the Study**

The effective approach to research depends on the research question and the purpose of the research (Cameron, Dwyer, Richardson, Ahmed, & Sukumaran, 2013; Pettigrew, 2013). To explore the successful HC productivity strategies of THL I conducted semistructured interview-based discussion with business leaders to extract their experiences and perceptions. Qualitative methodology, following social constructivist worldview and the use of interviews to explore a phenomenon was appropriate for the study (Bhati, Hoyt, & Huffman, 2014). Quantitative and mixed methods, which are postpositivist worldview methodologies, were not fitting because the methods involve investigating relationships between known variables and that was not applicable in this case.

To address the specific business problem within southern Nigeria requires a purposeful selection of business leaders who have experienced the implementation of



successful HC productivity programs in their organizations. A purposeful selection implies that the qualitative research design should be either case study or phenomenology (Sinden et al., 2013). A case study design was the most applicable for the study because the research intent was to explore the *what* and *how* of a real-life system with information from different sources (Bailey, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014). The strategies of other qualitative designs do not fit the research intent and cannot address the research question. Ethnography applies to an extensive study of a cultural group, grounded theory applies when developing theories from an experience, narrative research centers on the life stories of a person or a group of people, and phenomenology applies to the study of the experiences of a person or people about a situation or an event (Bailey, 2014; Miner-Romanoff, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014). Add summary to fully synthesize and conclude the paragraph.

### **Research Question**

What HCD strategies have THL leaders in Nigeria used to improve employee productivity?

### **Interview Questions**

The design of the interview protocol for this study was to address the research question within the framework of the human capital theory (HCT).

1. Briefly describe your experience in the THL industry with respect to HCD.
2. What are, and how do your organization HRM strategies improve employee productivity?
3. How do your organization HC productivity strategies affect your employees?
4. How do your organization HC productivity strategies affect employee turnover?

5. How do your organization HC productivity strategies affect corporate business performance?
6. How can THL leaders make the industry attractive to future employees?
7. What additional question should I ask on how to improve employee productivity and corporate business performance?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was the HCT. HCT became an area of research in 1960 from the 1776 works of Smith and subsequent works by economists (Heckman & Mosso, 2014). The theory proponents suggested that the society benefits economically from investing in people (Gurgu & Savu, 2014). The framework of HCT has two propositions, first that labor input is both quantitative and qualitative, the latter being the skillfulness or deftness demonstrated in performing work (Sweetland, 1996). Secondly, HCT theorists proposed that the competence acquired in education has a cost that the learner realizes in person (Cornacchione & Daugherty, 2013; Jepsen & Montgomery, 2012). The theorists furthered the idea that formal and informal education increases the capability and productivity of people, is quantifiable in monetary terms, and is the utmost investment in a human being (Sweetland, 1996). The HCT is, therefore, a useful perspective to study productivity as it relates to HCD.

The HCT is an appropriate theory to explore the improved value a person gains and can offer by being more educated. Various aspects of human development have seen research in HCT. Stuart (2013) used HCT as the socioeconomic basis of an argument for early child education. The theory has also been the foundation for discussion on wage inequalities and organizational productivity (Chen, 2013; Huffman, 2013; Inoue, Plehn-

Dujowich, Kent, & Swanson, 2013). Chen (2013) found out that companies whose directors possess political capital, that is, having political experience in addition to their conventional education, are more productive especially in economies with underdeveloped institutions. The HCT framework is relevant to illumine this inquiry into improving THL employees' productivity through HCD.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Competence framework.* A collection of competencies, structured to provide a quality assurance system that defines the education and practice of a profession (Atkinson et al., 2014).

*Corporate business performance.* The accounting metrics such as the return on investment, the ratios of sales to assets, operating income to assets, and operating income to sales that define business profitability (Leung, Richardson, & Jaggi, 2014).

*Customer needs.* Individual customer's needs and expectations, including feelings, motive, and concerns, for purchasing a service, and that a frontline employee needs to recognize to deliver the service delivery creatively (Wilder, Collier, & Barnes, 2014).

*Human capital.* The stock of abilities, knowledge, skills, social assets, and values acquired and developed through educational processes like schooling, training, and professional programs (Khan, Humayun, & Sajjad, 2015).

*Perceived service quality.* Perceived service quality is customers' experiential contextual psychological or cognitive evaluation of the quality of service delivered by an organization (Khuong & Uyen, 2014).

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

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are the underpinning premises on which a researcher bases an inquiry, and which may limit the outcome of the study (Pettigrew, 2013). A researcher could come to the research inquiry with underpinning knowledge and personal opinions that could be sources of bias (Kepes, Banks, & Oh, 2014). Researchers conducting qualitative studies should make explicit their biases and should provide mitigations for them (Pettigrew, 2013; Sinden et al., 2013). I assumed that (a) the participants will have sufficient experience, the right information, and will be willing to support my inquiry; and (b) that the participants will provide the right information.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are inherent and potential weaknesses in a study that indicate that more research is necessary for the results to be conclusive or generalized (Kepes et al., 2014). Although this research may add to the knowledge of THL, it also has limitations. First, the THL industry in Africa, and specifically in southern Nigeria, is not as developed as in many countries (WTTC, 2015a). Therefore, an analytic generalization of themes from the case study (Yin, 2014) may be limited to regions with THL industry at the same level of development. Other limitations include my skill as a researcher in framing interview questions that will elicit the right responses from the participants. Face-to-face interview may inhibit the participants' responses, and may constitute a limitation to obtaining full disclosure of their experience and perceptions (Sinden et al., 2013). Another limitation was that the participants opted to conduct the member checking and the review of the codes from the interviews over email as against in company of the

researcher. In addition, the number of the participants was few. These limitations are potential weaknesses of the study that may make the results not globally applicable.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are the boundaries of research inquiry set by the researcher (Zachrisson, 2014). Among the delimitations of this study was that the participants were THL leaders from southern Nigeria. Therefore, the results may not be applicable all over the country, or to Africa or the rest of the world. The participants were operators of hospitality services in two cosmopolitan cities in southern Nigeria; this excluded the experiences and perceptions of potential participants in the suburbs, towns, and rural areas. Another boundary condition was the relatively small sample size that may not be representative (Wester, Borders, Boul, & Horton, 2013; Yin, 2014) of the THL industry in southern Nigeria.

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The findings from this study could have implications for changes in different quarters in the perceptions and practices that affect the THL industry. HCD could result in positive changes to some negative indices in the THL industry. Using HCD could address poor remuneration, poor career development, poor dedication, and high turnover (Popescu, Iancu, Popescu, & Vasile, 2013). Overcoming these barriers to employee productivity could enhance the growth and realization of the full economic potential of the THL industry in the subregion. The findings could also initiate changes in other spheres such as in government THL policies and regulatory frameworks, and in the academia. These changes may be possible because the THL industry employs many

persons, and is strategic to the economy (Balkaran, 2013; Chun-Ming et al., 2014; Melissen, 2013; Popescu et al., 2013; WTTC, 2015b).

This study could also initiate changes in some business quarters. The recommendations of the study may make managers change undesirable human resource (HR) practices by implementing competence and career developing programs for THL workers. As proposed by the HC theorists, employees rich in HC may earn better remunerations than those that are not (Schulz, Chowdhury & Van, 2013). To achieve and sustain these contributions to the business, policymakers may need to enact supportive laws to HCD that enhance tourism and compel compliance. Regulators may have to include employee development in the sustainable development or corporate social responsibilities required of THL businesses. The government may also have to provide tax incentives to encourage organizations invest in HCD. These contributions would complement one another and could result in positive changes that might forestall the forecast industry decline.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Education brings about positive social change and adds value to people and the society (Gurgu & Savu, 2014). Advancement of knowledge contributes to economic growth and more earning for the educated (Sweetland, 1996). Pearlman and Schaffer (2013) noted that the use of untrained and illegal migrants as employees in THL resulted in the high employee turnover. Schmidt and Müller (2013) supported the position stating that lack of vocational training or a structured competence-based development program keeps such migrants unintegrated into the industry. A structured HCD program might deliver a net benefit to the industry. To the employees, there may be improved

remuneration, increased self-esteem, and job security. To the industry, there may be a reduction in employee turnover, improvement in productivity, improved attraction of graduates, and reduced engagement of illegal workers. The government could also experience increased GDP.

In addition, developing employees in the hospitality industry could yield a positive profile that may improve the sector's societal perception and aid social integration when more customers purchase THL services. Career development is an industry characteristic that affects its societal perception and attractiveness and is one of the top ten corporate social responsibilities that influence employees' wellbeing (Park & Levy, 2014; Wang & Huang, 2014). Enhancing the societal perception of the THL industry could improve social interaction through the industry, could improve patronage, and promote social integration in multiethnic societies (Schmidt & Müller, 2013). For instance, some potential customers have a negative perception about hotels, the patrons, and workers, which could be the reasons they do not patronize the services (Bhavani, 2013; Pearlman & Schaffer 2013; Popescu et al., 2013). Implementing the findings from this study may help develop a new type of THL professionals, especially in the hotel and restaurant subsectors that will enhance the attractiveness of the THL industry and encourage patronage. The opportunity to interact with new people in THL businesses and locations may promote social interaction and integration that are invaluable to an ethnically and religiously diverse country such as Nigeria. These benefits are valuable and are essential positive social changes.

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

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that THL business leaders can employ to develop employees' productivity through HCD to improve business performance and address skill shortage. The approach was to explore the central research question on what HCD strategies THL leaders in Nigeria were using to improve employee productivity. The contents of the literature review were themes and horizons that underpin productivity and business performance in service organizations with a focus on the THL industry, and the implications of HCD. I provided an overview of hospitality and a background on the appropriateness of HCT as the conceptual framework for the study. With the lens of the HCT, I explored the topic of HCD in service organizations, especially THL organizations, to address the central research question.

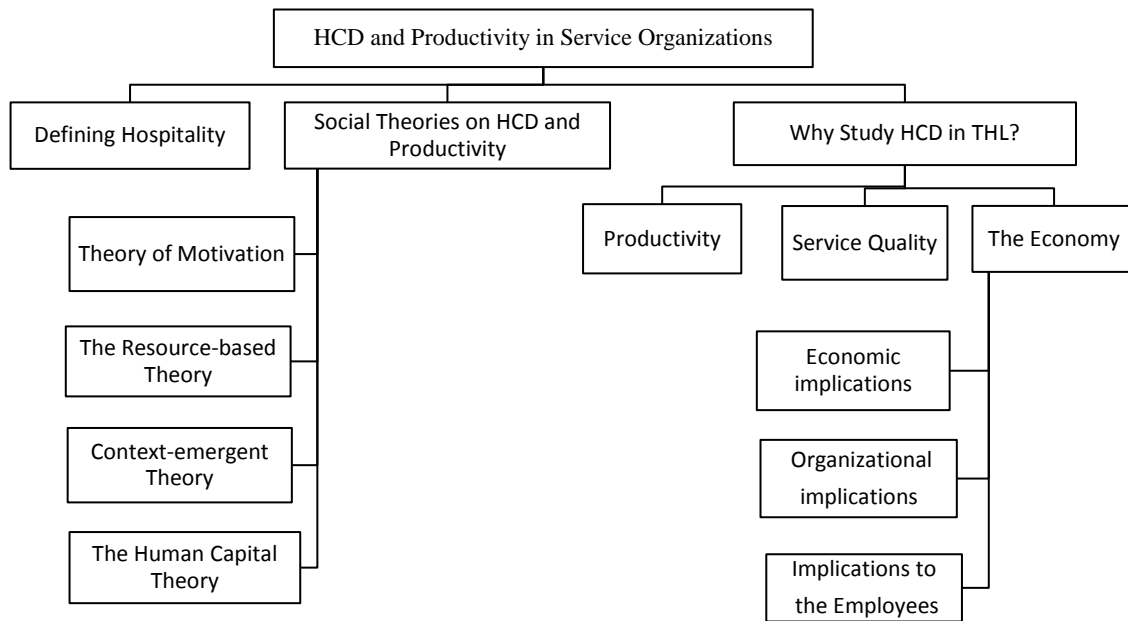
As a dimension of productivity, HCD may be evident in improvement in the quality of service delivered by employees; quality is an outcome of productivity (Mahapatra, 2014). While management asks for high productivity, customers demand quality service (Bhavani, 2013). Customer expectation could be more challenging in the THL industry because the customers come from different cultures, and they have different travel behaviors (Hsu, Woodside, & Marshall, 2013). Management needs to identify what constitutes quality service in the THL industry and aspire to deliver that to customers while simultaneously demanding high productivity from employees. Before reviewing the implications of HCD, as part of the literature review, I explored the service quality in the THL industry with a focus on the strategic place of HCD.

The literature review contains articles from different databases, Business Source Complete, Hospitality, and Tourism Complete, ProQuest Central, ScienceDirect, Google



Scholar, Emerald Management Journals, and ABI/INFORMS Complete. I composed search queries combining keywords such as *competence, consumer behavior, financial performance, hospitality, hotel, human capital, perception, productivity, service quality, sustainability, tourism, and training*. I also used references from some articles returned by the queries. Before exploring HCD in THL organizations, I presented a perspective on the connection between the topic of employee HCD and the different schools of thought on what hospitality is.

The 165 references that comprise this study include 144 scholarly peer-reviewed articles representing 87.3% of the total, 16 nonpeer reviewed articles representing 9.7%, three trade organization reports representing 1.8%, and two books representing 1.2%. The total references published within the past 5 years are 155, which is 93.9% of the total number. The literature review contains 140 references, with 130 references published within the past 5 years, representing 92.9%, and 119 from scholarly peer-reviewed sources, representing 85.0%. Figure 1 shows the structure of the literature used in the literature review.



*Figure 1.* The structure of the literature review showing the exploration of the topic of HCD in the THL industry.

### **Defining Hospitality**

People view hospitality from different perspectives (Melissen, 2013). Therefore, defining hospitality may provide a framework for approaching the strategy for HCD for the practitioners in the industry. THL employees must be able to meet the expectations and demands of local and international patrons because the clients and the local community play important roles in tourism and hospitality (Chun-Ming et al., 2014). However the schools of thought define hospitality, the providers and the recipients of the services should be important (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2012). The employees must be competent and capable of meeting expectations. This requirement implies that the employees' development should be paramount to the business leaders.

## **Social Theories on HCD and Labor Productivity**

Social theories have influenced the development of different fields such as the THL (Smith, Xiao, Nunkoo, & Tukamushaba, 2013). Human resource development (HRD) needs new insights to build new theories that will improve practice (Nimon, 2015). For instance, coaching, a growing HRD process aimed at developing the competence of personnel, lacks sufficient research and faces the criticism of being theoretical (Ellinger & Kim, 2014; Szalma, 2014). The theoretical approach in this study followed normativist epistemology, a model that attempts to describe, explain, and change the social world for a possible better world (Lizardo, 2012). The intent of this qualitative case study was to explore employees' professional development strategies that THL business leaders employ to improve productivity and business performance. The professional development of workers could create a positive social change that directly affects the company, the employees, the customers, and the society. The social theory that will best suit the intent of the study, should be one that subscribes in part or total to the normativist worldview. The theory must border on creating positive change in the individuals, the workers. Such theory could serve as the conceptual framework. Following are overviews of some possible theories.

**The classical theory of human motivation.** Perhaps the foremost theory of interest related to human development would be the classic Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation. Maslow explained the hierarchy of needs to include physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow noted that motivation was a determinant of behavior and that the dominant need of a man is an avenue to motivate him. When humans meet a need, being insatiable and a wanting animal, they crave for the

next level of need (Maslow, 1943). Motivation involves having a goal, allocating the right level of energy to the goal, demonstrating persistence, and using incentives (Szalma, 2014); motivation may not substitute competencies necessary for productivity. Motivation depends on the structure of the workplace (Hancock, 2013), whereas competence pertains to the workforce.

Acquisition of knowledge is one of the techniques the workforce needs to realize the necessity of respect–strength, confidence, independence, and productivity (Maslow, 1943). Unfortunately, in designing a motivating workplace, traditionally, designers ignore the role of the human performer (Hancock, 2013). Most recommendations for boosting motivation have shallow psychological theoretical underpinning (Szalma, 2014). What motivates a workforce relate to culture in a region of the world may be counterproductive in another. An incompetent workforce would not be productive however motivating the workplace is. Therefore, the theory of motivation may not provide a sufficient theoretical construct for enhancing personnel HC for increased productivity.

**Contemporary theories of human development.** Sequel to the work of Maslow, social scientists promulgated and carried out studies on other human resource and behavioral theories that border on the development of the human performer in service organizations. Some of the theories that apply to the HR and productivity in an organization are the resource-based theory (RBV), the context-emergent theory (CET), and the HCT. Following is a brief description of these theories and their applicability to addressing the research question.

**The resource-based theory.** Shaw, Park, and Kim (2013) in advocating for an internal perspective as against external factor for organizational competitive advantage built their argument on the resource-based view (RBV) as the theoretical framework. RBV researchers argue that HRM practices—training, admirable remuneration, financial incentive, and nonsubstitutability—enhance the HC (Hinterhuber, 2013; Lin & Wu, 2014; Shaw et al., 2013). The school of thought posited that the accumulation of valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable (VRIN) resources is a source of competitive advantage, which correlated with performance (Lin & Wu, 2014; Shaw et al., 2013).

Notably, researchers have used the RBV to explain the relationship between resources and competitive advantage (Hinterhuber, 2013); the theory is also applicable to underscore the importance of the HC as a strategic organizational resource. The focus of the theory is the differential competitiveness and performance of organizations based on their various internal resources and capabilities (Hinterhuber, 2013; Lin & Wu, 2014; Shaw et al., 2013). However, the RBV theory does not provide a framework to explore the sole development of the HC as strategic to maximizing the return from other resources. Treating the HC alongside other internal resources could underrate its strategic position. This lack of clear differentiation of resources is a drawback of the RBV (Hinterhuber, 2013). The competitiveness of organizations like Apple and service organizations in THL inextricably ties to the core competencies of the employees more than to other internal resources (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2012). Therefore, the HC deserves a differential consideration.

The equal consideration given to resources in RBV implies the theory needs to combine with other variables to predict competitiveness and profitability (Hinterhuber,

2013; Lin & Wu, 2014). Lin and Wu (2014) submitted that management must consider dynamic capabilities like learning alongside the RBV for competitive advantage while Hinterhuber (2013) advocated the need to include customers' perspective. Organizations need to develop additional capabilities such as customer focus, to interpose accumulated VRIN resources to improve their competitive advantage and performance (Hinterhuber, 2013; Lin & Wu, 2014). Therefore, the RBV alone was inadequate to provide the normativist framework to explore competitiveness from the perspective of developing organizational learning capability, or the acquisition of information and knowledge. The focus of the applicable theory should be the organization's employees and their core competencies.

**The context-emergent turnover theory.** The context-emergent turnover theory (CET) focuses more on the organization's HR, particularly on turnover (Reilly, Nyberg, Maltarich, & Weller, 2014). Turnover is a prevalent index in the THL industry (Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013); therefore, the CET may apply to this study. Turnover depletes the HR of an organization, which could place such a company in a relatively lower competitive position within its industry (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013; Park & Shaw, 2013; Reilly et al., 2014; Shaw et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the CET proposes that voluntary turnover is a characteristic of a dynamic system (Reilly et al., 2014). The theory implies that HC flow, changes in the HR because of hiring, turnover and transfers can affect an organization's productive capacity (Reilly et al., 2014). The CET has found application in the examination of how individual and collective turnover affect an organization's performance and customer satisfaction (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013; Reilly et al., 2014).

Reilly et al. (2014) presented a CET model of job demand, hiring rate, employee transfer and voluntary turnover rates and their relationship to patient satisfaction in healthcare delivery. Reilly et al. however noted that their model, based on the quantity of turnover, does not explain a significant 76% of the variance that may relate to the quality of the personnel turnover. Therefore, Reilly et al. proposed that further research into quantifying the quality of the HR considered in their model was required. The observation agrees with HCT that the competence acquired by the human resource in education has a quality value the learner realizes (Cornacchione & Daugherty, 2013; Jepsen & Montgomery, 2012; Sweetland, 1996). Turnover has both the quantity and the quality dimensions, but the CET does not address the latter.

In a seemingly conflicting assertion, Nyberg and Ployhart (2013) described the CET as an emergent theory that considers both quantitative and qualitative dimensions in collective turnover. The quantitative dimension was the percentage of turnover while the qualitative dimension relates to the cognitive ability and the competence of the personnel (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013). Nyberg and Ployhart furthered that the qualitative dimension was wanting in existing research and argued that authors should embed collective turnover in human capital resource (HCR) studies and RBV. In other words, a better understanding ensues by embedding RBV, CET, and HCR (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013). This submission agrees with the perspective of other authors that RBV requires other variables to predict competitiveness adequately (Hinterhuber, 2013; Lin & Wu, 2014). In essence, there should be a framework to qualify HR; a task the RBV and the CET may not be adequate to provide independently or in combination. Therefore, another theory such as the HCT that addresses the quality of the HCR was suitable.

**The HCT.** Smith introduced the HCT in 1776, but the theory became an important theme in economic research from 1960 (Heckman & Mosso, 2014; Sweetland, 1996). The theory proponents suggested that the society benefits economically from investing in people (Gurgu & Savu, 2014; Sweetland, 1996). HCT's framework rests on two pillars, first that labor input is both quantitative and qualitative, the latter being the skillfulness demonstrated in performing work (Sweetland, 1996). The second proposition was that the competence acquired in education has a cost that the learner realizes in person (Cornacchione & Daugherty, 2013; Jepsen & Montgomery, 2012; Sweetland, 1996). HCT theorists have shown that formal and informal education is the utmost investment in a human being. Education increases the capability, and the productivity of people, which is quantifiable in realizable monetary terms (Sweetland, 1996). Education is the primary means to accumulate the HC. The effects of education, training, skills, and knowledge on people's productivity and earnings are the fundamental arguments of HCT.

The HCT has found application in different HRM research and applications. Based on the HCT, Mertens and Robken (2013) quantitatively investigated the benefits of doctoral degree particularly on financial returns. Mertens and Robken argued that education improves the work productivity of employees and attracts higher wages and that variance in earnings can be because of differences in the HC. Economic and cultural advantages differentiate societal elites while communicative capital is essential to social interaction, an important context when considering turnover in an organization (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013; Park & Shaw, 2013). The emergent themes in the applications of the HCT in the literature, such as poor remuneration and turnover, are also common to the



THL industry (Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013). Therefore, the HCT was relevant to studying HCD in the THL industry.

The HCT holds direct implication for the global economy. Underpinned by the HCT, Rees (2013) explored the importance and relevance of adult learning to a knowledge-based economy. Rees submitted that adult education supports a high level of skills required in a global economy for growth and competitiveness. The globalization of trade brought competitive pressure that compelled technically weak economies to compete based on low-cost production to invest in improving the productivity of their people (Rees, 2013). The THL industry that contributes significantly to global GDP must also develop employee HC to meet the challenge of globalization, to improve productivity, and to avert the imminent deficit in HC (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013). HCD may contribute to attenuating voluntary THL turnover occasioned by employees' quest for better career opportunities, further education, and higher wages (Nyberg & Ployhart, 2013). The consequence of everyone furthering education as noted by Rees (2013), however, is a decline in unskilled and semiskilled occupation, and employment opportunities. More application of HCT in organizational research is required to investigate the validity of Rees' submission.

Like the RBV, the HCT identifies the knowledge and experience of the employees as pivotal resources representing organizations' capabilities and competitive advantages (Schulz et al., 2013). These capabilities can be general or firm specific, the latter being task-specific or nontask specific (Schulz et al., 2013). Schulz et al. (2013) quantitatively advanced that the HCT supports the fact that employees with a high level of HC manifested the same in productive capabilities and received better remuneration.

This position implies that firms that adopt HC productivity-based strategies for competitive advantage will take the education of their workforce as important.

A quality of research practice, especially human research, is that practitioners will not always see from the same perspective. Humans are a complex being and may be difficult to theorize in many contexts; therefore, some authors viewed the HCT from a contrary angle. There are proHCT scholars, like Ogarlaci (2012), as well as those that see the theory from a contrary viewpoint, such as Saeverot, Reindal, and Wivestad (2013). There are differing opinions on how investment in humans affects the micro- and macroeconomies (Cornacchione & Daugherty, 2013; Rees, 2013) for instance. Despite the different perspectives to HCT, the theory advocated workplace learning and predicted increased employee earning and organizational profitability as consequences (Mertens & Röbbken, 2013; Schulz et al., 2013). Based on these submissions, I selected the HCT as the study conceptual framework to explore the strategies to develop the quality variable of HCR in the THL industry. This study could provide an essential complement to the application of the RBV and the CET to HCD in the THL industry.

### **Why Study HCD in the Nigerian THL Industry?**

The THL industry is essential to every economy. THL as a global economic activity contributes trillions of dollars annually and employs millions worldwide (Ogarlaci, 2012). The industry experiences keen internal competition among players and managers face the daunting task of delivering excellent service to customers whose expectations increase with knowledge and technology. A notable challenge is the lack of THL-focused training programs to develop practitioners in the industry (Chen, Hsu, & Huang, 2013; Iancu, Popescu, Popescu, & Vasile, 2013; Melissen, 2013). The result is an

adverse effect on the perception of the industry, corporate productivity, and financial performance. As a result, the potential contributions of the industry to economic development and poverty alleviation in developing regions of the world remain untapped.

Research is indispensable to understanding the place of the THL industry (Hjalager, 2015). According to Hjalager (2015), research and the interest of policy-makers are essential to innovation to develop the THL industry. For example, researchers have shown that THL services derive significant benefits from policies favorable to tourism (Ogarlaci, 2012). A staggering 78% of tourists will require lodging, and will have positive spillover demand on restaurant services (Anamaria & Maria-Cristina, 2013; Chun-Ming et al., 2014). A country such as Nigeria, which fledgling THL industry constitutes mainly lodging and restaurants would benefit from research. The government could make favorable and economically beneficial policies with excellent recommendations from industry-focused research.

The THL industry in subSaharan Africa especially Nigeria is, particularly in need. The local THL industry is not immune to the prevalent situation in some other regions of the world. For instance, the 2015 WTTC report on benchmarking travel and tourism showed that the number of international visitors to Nigeria declined by about 50% from 2010 to 2011. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, but the country THL industry ranked poorly overall at 131 out of 141 countries in the global benchmark (WTTC, 2015a). The prioritization of travel and tourism, and by extension the hospitality subsector, was lower in Nigeria than in other countries in the subSaharan Africa region (WTTC, 2015a). The country human resources and the labor market were among the

worst globally (WTTC, 2015a). The government and the academia need to give more focus to THL to turn the fate of the Nigerian THL industry in the positive direction.

Among the prevalent themes in the THL industry are poor remuneration, job insecurity, lack of professionalism, lack of commitment to the industry, and high employee turnover (Chun-Ming et al., 2014). Practices in the hospitality industry appear not to enhance the maximization of the strategic benefits of the HCR in the industry and of the potential advantages of the industry to the society, southern Nigeria inclusive. The development of any industry to the point of providing worthy careers for the teeming world population requires structured professional development. Career development enhances the commitment to an industry and may reduce employee turnover and improve productivity. Players in the service sector must be competent to understand and meet the demand of local and international customers whose choices depend on diverse factors (Shemma, 2014). The HR in the THL industry, therefore, requires research focused on the areas that can improve their productivity and retention.

Focusing on the HR and the labor market as a THL industry competitiveness indicator, the Nigerian THL workforce scores less than three on a scale of seven (WTTC, 2015a). While Nigeria occupies the seventh position among 141 countries globally in employee hiring and firing practices, the country ranks 102 in the ease of getting skilled employees (WTTC, 2015a). The implication of this data may be that organizations in the Nigerian THL industry hire unskilled labor, provide internal training, keep the competent employees within their organization, and fire the rest. Focusing on the benchmark outcome on HR and labor market subindices, Nigeria ranked 48 and 50 globally respectively in staff training, and pay and productivity (WTTC, 2015a). The scores on

these indices were better than the global position of the whole industry and somewhat corroborates the hire and fire interpretation. The industry needs to study what successful managers do to develop their HCR to enhance productivity instead of hiring and firing unskilled laborers.

Understanding the strategic HCD practices managers in the hospitality industry should adopt is essential to turning the HR metrics in the positive direction to enhance staff commitment, productivity, and corporate financial performance. This study was a response to the earlier recommendations to inquire the strategic role of HCD in business (Anca-Ioana, 2013; Darwish et al., 2013; Phipps, Prieto, & Ndinguri, 2013), particularly in the unskilled nonWestern economies such as the subSaharan Africa (Danquah & Ouattara, 2014). The study was about the THL industry because the industry creates employment and is strategic to poverty alleviation in subSaharan Africa countries (Chun-Ming et al., 2014; Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013). Jakada and Gambo (2014) also noted that paying particular attention to the internal capabilities in the hospitality industry is essential. Implementing the recommendations of this study may constitute a timely response to forestall the imminent skill shortage and potential loss in the GDP the THL industry contributes to the Nigerian economy.

### **Service Quality in the THL Industry**

Delivering a quality THL service, as in other service-based industries, depends on meeting customers' needs. The expectations of customers differ and are imperative in identifying, acquiring, developing, and retaining a client. Bhavani (2013) chronicled customers' expectations of the hospitality industry in Hyderabad city, India. Using a chi-square test, Bhavani rejected the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the

expectations of the customers and the services provided by five-star hotels. From the analysis, 41% of hotel customers get information through the media and another 41% from family and friends. Bhavani observed that location and proximity, good service, and room price were the factors that influence customers' choice of hotels. An important submission made was that a significant number of potential clients in the region would not stay in commercial accommodations. Fifty-one percent would prefer to stay with friends and family, another 11% in company guest houses while 2% are undecided (Bhavani, 2013). The statistics showed that hotels of all categories in the region had only 36% of potential customers available to serve (Bhavani, 2013). The meager percentage, noted Bhavani, demanded food and beverage, recreational facility, car rental, shopping arcade, and other services in decreasing order of demand. Dissatisfaction of the customers in these areas cost the hotels as much as 30% loss of clients (Bhavani, 2013). Bhavani conducted the study only on five-star hotels; therefore, it was imperative to examine what could cause customers' dissatisfaction to the extent that 30% will withdraw their patronage.

Researchers have explored the cause and remedy of customer dissatisfaction and illuminated the underlying causes of customer withdrawal. Following a quantitative approach, Mahapatra (2014) examined the possible causes of customer dissatisfaction and the reasons why customers endure dissatisfaction. Mahapatra submitted that firm's consumer care, the expectation of consumers, and the commitment of the firm were the causes of dissatisfaction. The most important factor was the commitment of the company. Customers may endure dissatisfaction because of warranty and time factor, but they soon engage in negative word of mouth publicity, service withdrawal, and the organization

loses important feedback and business (Mahapatra, 2014). Organizations should proactively address the possible causes of customers' dissatisfaction to avoid negative word of mouth publicity and loss of business (Mahapatra, 2014). Mahapatra did not directly mention HC as a factor affecting customer dissatisfaction, but the role of people was evident in the argument that organizational commitment (OC) was the most important factor affecting dissatisfaction. OC is a people issue (Mahapatra, 2014; Phipp et al., 2013). One other people matter affecting quality was employee involvement (EI); EI has the dimensions of information; knowledge and skills; power; and rewards (Phipp et al., 2013). HR practices in these dimensions influence OC, which in turn affects organizational productivity and its aspects such as output, quality, sales, and cost (Phipp et al., 2013). Based on social exchange and stakeholders theories, failure in employees' OC will affect other stakeholders and organizational performance (Cording, Harrison, Hoskisson, & Jonsen, 2014; Phipp et al., 2013).

Boon-Liat and Zabid (2013) submitted that corporate image mediates the nexus between service quality and customer satisfaction, which translates into customer loyalty. By analyzing a survey completed by 500 hotel guests, Boon-Liat and Zabid showed that the influence of quality of service on customer satisfaction was significant and that customer satisfaction correlated with customer loyalty. Though not investigated, Boon-Liat and Zabid noted that customers' perception of value, employee performance, and demographics affected customer loyalty. Relating the findings of Boon-Liat and Zabid to the EI dimensions, employees' knowledge, and skill stand out as notable areas that could most significantly affect the corporate image (Phipp et al., 2013). Therefore, to translate customer satisfaction to customer loyalty, an organization also needs to foster a good

image or customer perception, and the knowledge and skills of employees in delivering satisfactory services are cardinal in this respect. Employees need the necessary competencies to support a desirable corporate image.

**Leadership.** Leadership is a strategic capability and an essential resource for any industry to operate profitably and address business risks. Arasli (2012) listed leadership as the first of thirteen factors critical for hospitality business excellence. Leaders are not commonplace, and the skill seldom comes with preemployment qualifications. Therefore, HCD starts with THL leadership and management. THL managers need leadership development programs to be impactful and to appreciate the need for quality service and competent employees.

**Customers' perception of quality:** Understanding and managing customers' perception is important to delivering an excellent THL business. In a study of the enterprise excellence of high-rated hotels in Iran, Arasli (2012) proposed a quality improvement strategy based on established critical success factors from Kanji's excellence model. Arasli argued that a hospitality organization's healthy relationship with employees, customers, suppliers, and social shareholders were cardinal to success. Efficient management of frontline employees' attitudes was important to managing customers' perception and was essential to continuous improvement (Arasli, 2012). After reviewing arguments for and against a collection of business excellence models, Arasli recommended the Kanji's model 13 critical success factors. Arasli concluded from an ANOVA test that the managers, chiefs, and employees of the 3-, 4-, and 5- star hotels in the study had different perceptions of quality. The variance in managerial perception, Arasli noted, could correlate with the rating of the hotels and the perception of their



customers as well. By implication, perception could play a significant role in the rating, performance, and profitability of THL organizations. In the same vein, Ramseook-Munhurrun (2012) observed that customer's perception was next to food quality among factors that affect business performance in restaurants. By evaluating the relative significance of service quality dimensions or constructs in the restaurant services using multiple regression analysis, Ramseook-Munhurrun submitted that satisfaction and behavioral intentions link to service quality. Employees, therefore, need development in necessary competencies such as soft skills that could influence customer's perception positively and assessment of quality to benefit the business.

The perception of customers about THL services influences business profitability. Irrespective of the reason a person lodged in a hotel, the host-guest relationship is commercial (Melissen, 2013). The perception of the value offered affects the relationship (Iyiola & Akintunde, 2011). Some potential customers, who are people from the society, do have a negative perception of the hospitality industry (Pearlman & Schaffer 2013; Popescu et al., 2013). These perceptions could be a result of HR practices among other reasons (Pearlman & Schaffer 2013; Popescu et al., 2013). If the HR practices do not improve, the customers' negative perceptions may not change. An organization could gain a good perception from clients and other companies by investing in the development of her frontline (Coutelle-Brillet, Riviere, & Veronique, 2014). Hospitality managers, therefore, need requisite information and training (Iancu et al., 2013) that could improve HR factors, and that could create a positive perception of the industry.

**The perception of the employees.** The perception of an industry is an essential stimulant to draw potential employees to contribute to the growth of the industry. Wang

and Huang (2014) in agreement with Pearlman and Schaffer (2013) reported that working condition was one of the reasons for the negative view of the tourism industry among students. When employed, the assessment of the employees about the corporate social responsibility of their THL organizations also affects the intention to turnover (Park & Levy, 2014). Practitioners need to improve the perception of the THL industry, to aid the recruitment and retention of skills and productive workforce in the industry.

Understanding and positively influencing the perception and expectations of the stakeholders in the industry, especially the employees, about HR practices is crucial.

**Competence of the human resources.** Employees' knowledge and skills influence service delivery and has a significant effect on the perception of customers and potential employees (Boon-Liat & Zabid, 2013; Phipp et al., 2013). Competent persons are cardinal in employing resources to achieve organizational strategic goals. Though the experience of managers was the only HR factor that correlated with profitability (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2012), McEdwards (2014) argued that experience only was insufficient for superior performance. Hospitality is a consumer-focused endeavor that demands managers to know what the needs and desires of customers are before the frontline employees deliver the service to meet the client needs (Jakada & Gambo, 2014). The manager's competence, as well as that of the workforce, therefore, is critical to good business performance (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2012). The literature has studies on the competencies THL managers' need, but publications on the competence requirements or the HCD for THL front line workers is scarce (Kim & Park, 2014). The lack of a defined HCD for THL employees is an intolerable risk given the industry's high set-up cost and potential benefits.

### **HCD at the Different Levels of the Economy**

Seong-O and Patterson (2014) carried out a comparison of the implications of the HCT at three levels, individual (supply side), organization (demand side), and country (supply and demand sides). Starting with an extensive literature review, Seong-O and Patterson examined the themes relating to the HCT at the three different levels and opined that HC is about the acquisition of skills through education and training. According to the study, investment in HC results in higher level of competencies, with consequent higher wages and salaries (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014). From their perspective, some companies were interested in providing development in organizational-specific skills and not in general skills because of the fear of employee turnover. Whereas, investing in some specific HC decreases employee turnover and increases productivity (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014). Seong-O and Patterson, therefore, advised governments to subsidize organizational-sponsored general skill acquisition to avoid labor shortage. Although this may enhance the supply side, Seong-O and Patterson, however, noted that the HCT fails in predicting the outcome on the demand side. That is, the HCT does not address how the development of the individual translates to the availability of jobs, which is the interest of governments (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014). The works of Bishop and Brand (2014) and Sillah (2015) nullified this assertion.

Seong-O and Patterson (2014) adequately captured the history and implications of the HCT at the three frames of reference but failed to examine the influence of general skills on organizational-specific skills and vice versa. Further research could investigate whether individuals with general skills are more adaptable to organizational-specific skills and whether they are the preferred candidates for job recruitment. In like manner,

persons competent in specific organizational skills often seek general skills, especially when aspiring for leadership roles. The interdependency could imply the two skill sets could be complementary. Therefore, I will explore the implications of HCD, based on both skill sets, to the national economy, the organization, and the employees.

### **The Implications of HCD to the Economy**

Education is essential to sustainable tourism and hospitality. In the study about responsible tourism in Cyprus, Farmaki, Constanti, Yiasemi, and Karis (2014) submitted that education or local training are possible solutions to enforcing responsible tourism in the popular tourist destination. Farmaki et al. provided an overview of the strategies industry players adopt towards responsible tourism and the attendant challenges. Following a qualitative methodology, Farmaki et al. explored the relationship and differences between sustainable tourism and responsible tourism and the challenges to the adoption of the concept of responsible tourism in Cyprus. Cyprus tourism operators were more concerned with short-term profit maximization than with sustainability, but Farmaki et al. observed that foreign tour operators, education, and training were avenues of positive social change. In other words, educating Cyprus tourism operators, or implementing necessary HCD in the country, could be the panacea to the environmental challenges of the industry. This submission points to the need for HCD in the country's THL industry, and perhaps, other regions of the world.

HCD stimulates economic growth through the establishment of new businesses. Predicated on the HCT, Bishop and Brand (2014) studied the correlation between the heterogeneity of HC and the formation of new firms in an area. By analyzing the data on new businesses in Great Britain's 409 local districts over 7 years, Bishop and Brand

illuminated the influence of HC on job creation; the demand side of Seong-O and Patterson's (2014) study. Seong-O and Patterson had submitted that HCT does not predict job creation, but Bishop and Brand argued to the contrary. Bishop and Brand found that the rate of growth of service firms around a region correlated with the level and diversity of the local HC. The dependent variables included the number of business start-up, pay, and unemployment statistics, and the levels of academic qualifications represented HC. Bishop and Brand concluded that, theoretically, service entrepreneurship correlated positively with the level and the heterogeneity of HC. This observation resonated with another one made by Sillah (2015) that higher levels of education and foreign direct investment (FDI) contributed to higher productivity and technology transfer than international oil trade in Saudi Arabia.

Sun and He (2014) also attested to the influence of HCD on economic growth through the investigation of the influence of FDI on the local HC using the generalized method of moments (GMM). FDI has an insignificant direct effect on HC, but the overall effect of FDI on HC is significant (Sun & He, 2014). The effect of FDI on HC, according to Sun and He depended on the interaction effect between FDI and financial deregulation. Economic growth and development, and the interaction between FDI and local financial system influence the HC (Sun & He, 2014). Despite the influence on HC, FDI does not translate to sustainable economic growth if not moderated by local HC (Sun & He, 2014). The essential interaction between FDI and HC before the former translates to economic development reiterates the importance of HCD to the local economy.

A country needs to develop the local HC to make the most benefit from FDI. Lin, Kim, and Wu (2013) used an inequality regression model and secondary cross-country

data to investigate the HC, and the nexus between FDI and income inequality. FDI, according to Lin et al., positively influences the economy below a threshold of HC, improving wealth distribution and narrowing income inequality. Beyond the critical threshold, Lin et al. argued, FDI benefits the affluent and hurts the poor. FDI promotes economic growth more in countries with lower HC but at the expense of the poor in countries with higher HC (Lin et al., 2013). Therefore, the THL industry in Nigeria, a country whose HC is not as developed, would benefit more from FDI with appropriate HCD (Lin et al., 2013; WTTC, 2015a). By implication, FDI, which could be one of the Nigerian government strategies for growing the economy, the THL industry inclusive, should have HCD in its foci.

The return on investment on HCD may outperform some classical economic growth strategies in the long term (Konopczyński, 2014). In examining how taxes and spending on education influenced economic growth in Poland, Konopczyński (2014) developed an economic growth model based on Mankiw-Romer-Weil growth model and conceptualized HC as a depreciating stock that requires investment. The analysis included four tax revenues, taxes on capital, labor, HC, and consumption. Konopczyński concluded that spending on education at the expense of public or private consumption had more effect on the economy than an equivalent increase in private savings and additional investment in physical capital. Konopczyński observed that Polish families save some 21% of the GDP. Investment in education was a meager 3% of the savings while consumption accounted for 97%. Konopczyński noted that increasing the investment in education by 1% would have the same positive effect on the economy as reducing all taxes by 4%, but it appeared the government was unaware of this potential.

HCD holds a significant potential for the growth of the Polish and other economies where the study outcome could be similar.

Exposure to international experiences, technology, and networking could enhance productivity. Luckstead et al. (2014) divided productivity into HC and total factor productivity (TFP) to evaluate, compare, and forecast the USA and the Chinese economies. In the evaluation, Luckstead et al. submitted that investment-specific technology (IST) and HC represented two sources of economic development in China. The development of the HC, represented by increasing average years of education, enabled China to adapt and exploit Western technologies (Luckstead et al., 2014). The adaptation helped China to improve Chinese quality of labor and to sustain an average 9% GDP growth (Luckstead et al., 2014). Luckstead et al. also found that HC accounted for 46.3% to 61.5% of TFP between 1952 and 2000 in the United States. These observations implied that technology transfer from a high HC economy to a low HC economy could influence positive GDP growth in the recipient economy. Less productive economies could increase own productivity by adopting or adapting experiences and technologies from developed economies such as the USA, to put it differently.

Yeoh (2014) in the study about the internationalization of family businesses corroborated the submissions of Luckstead et al. (2014). Yeoh observed through a regression analysis having the international experience of an organization's chief executive officer (CEO) as a variable that internationalization is a significant strategic change. Yeoh argued that the extent of internationalization of a firm's CEO, moderate technology sourcing, HCD, and innovation influence business performance. Yeoh furthered that the level of exposure of CEOs influences a company's success because

“internationalized” CEOs may have social networks that could enhance foreign business partnership. Internationalization confers global legitimacy and could reduce risks attendant to new businesses (Yeoh, 2014). Managers of THL organizations could give their employees some level of international exposure that could translate to improved productivity, industry, and economic development.

Son and Noja (2013), contrary to popular assumption, submitted that developing the local HC reduces unwarranted migration. Son and Noja examined the role of investment in HC on labor force migration and socio-economic development for states in the European Union (EU) over the last decade. Son and Noja developed macroeconomic models and tested the models with time series and cross-sectional secondary data from some EU states – Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Migration from these countries reduced the available local labor force and GDP per capita, but as the educational level improved from primary to upper-secondary, the improvement in education reduced migration (Son & Noja, 2013). Emigration reduced as the more skilled laborers gain improved employment perspectives and job opportunities improved (Son & Noja, 2013). Following the experience of these EU countries, governments could institute policies that make organizations in high GDP industries such as the THL industry to develop local HC to reduce emigration and improve the local economy. An example of such policy, according to Di Falco and Bulte (2015), is the provision of economic incentives.

Another important HCD program governments can put in place is adult learning system. Underpinned by the HCT, Rees (2013) explored adult learning systems, its relevance to the knowledge-based economy, and the response of different capitalist



countries to the challenge. Rees noted that adult learning generates a high level of skills required in a global economy for growth and competitiveness. National governments made direct vocational provisions to benefit from adult learning systems even though there was no consensus on the strategy to address it (Rees, 2013). The THL industry in Nigeria could benefit likewise if the Nigerian government responds positively to provide functional THL-focused adult learning or vocational training. The globalization of trade has introduced competitive pressure that compelled nontechnically advanced economies that are not able to compete at low-cost production to invest in improving the productivity of their HC (Rees, 2013). An implication of this, however, is a decline in unskilled and semiskilled occupation and employment opportunities (Rees, 2013).

Education differentiates the performance of people. Gurgu and Savu (2014) submitted that education is the bedrock of the HCT. In a comparison of the country of Romania to the rest of Europe, Gurgu and Savu reported significant deficiencies in the Romanian economy that the HCT can explain. For instance, a long-term lack of investment in HC can have consequences not limited to poverty, marginalization and exclusion from the society (Gurgu & Savu, 2014). Gurgu and Savu's observation was not different from that made by Wietzke (2015) who concluded that education is sufficient to initiate self-propelling processes of income growth. A development strategy that focuses the alleviation of poverty should pay attention to developing the local HC because the educated records the highest employment and earning levels (Gurgu & Savu, 2014; Wietzke, 2015). Educated employees possess more HC than those that are not. For these reasons, formal education of people is required to enhance productive capacity, the HC, and to increase employees' income to alleviate poverty.

Based on these arguments, HCD is important to the growth of the national economy. Countries such as China that leveraged the population to grow the economy now need to focus on HCD (Cai, 2013). Cai (2013) explored the HR challenges in China after the transition in the country's leadership by analyzing Chinese census data from the perspective of recent research in HRM. Cai found that the population demographic advantage that supported China's three-decade economic growth has ended. Cai forecasted a decline in the country's economic growth rate in the coming decade and proposed a reform of household registration, training, and the education systems. China needs the country's policymakers and the HR professionals to focus HCD on supporting the economy in the future (Cai, 2013). The scenario may not be different for countries such as Nigeria, which should begin to pay closer attention to HCD, especially to grow the THL industry and the economy.

### **The Implications of HCD to Organizations**

**Corporate productivity.** Organizations should invest in their employee's HC to enhance their productivity and competitive advantage. In support of the accumulation of HC in an organization, Kwon and Rupp (2013) submitted that HC turnover was more significant than employee turnover. Based on three theories, the HCT, the social capital theory (SCT), and the cost-benefit perspective (CBP), Kwon and Rupp noted that HC turnover holds more unfavorable consequences than employee turnover. In a statistical analysis of 155 South Korean firms that support the theoretical model, Kwon and Rupp showed that the turnover of high-performing employees had a stronger effect on organizational performance than the turnover of low-performing employees. A 1% increase in high-performer turnover could lower the return on equity (ROE) and return on

asset (ROA) by 3% and 8% respectively (Kwon & Rupp, 2013). Therefore, organizations should be more conscious of the stock of HC than the number of employees, that is, organizations should avoid losing high-HC high-performing employees.

Viewed through the lenses of other social theories, the conclusions on the importance of the HC compared to the count of employees were similar (Shaw et al., 2013). Based on the RBV theory, Shaw et al. (2013) advocated a focus on internal factors as against external factors for competitive advantage. Shaw et al. argued that HRM practices – training, proper remuneration, financial incentive, and nonsubstitutability – enhance the HC. The accumulation of HC is beneficial as a source of competitive advantage and profit (Shaw et al., 2013). Reilly et al. (2014) corroborated this position from the perspective of the CET in their submission that both the quantity and quality of voluntary turnovers affected the HC resource. The effect of changes in the HC may not be uniform or linear perhaps because of the differences in the HC of employees (Kwon & Rupp, 2013; Reilly et al., 2014). These observations established the significance of the employees' HC and the reasons managers of THL organizations should accumulate the HC and avoid its indiscriminate turnover.

Meanwhile, accumulating HC is not without attendant risks that could affect productivity if not properly managed (Gurgu & Savu, 2014). An educated workforce desires involvement beyond the tactical or operational affairs of the organization and, therefore, needs proper engagement. First, engaging employees requires job fitness; that is, having the right person in the right role (Moreland, 2013). Moreland noted that 71% of workers in the USA were in job roles for which they were inadequate, and that the country loses \$370 billion to these disengaged employees. A poor job fit affected the

employees and the company's bottom-line, whereas, well-engaged employees improved business performance by as much as 19.2% (Moreland, 2013). Therefore, organizational leaders need to be knowledgeable in engaging high-HC employees by placing them where their competencies fit. Leaders must recruit the right candidates and deploy them appropriately for maximum productivity (Moreland, 2013). HCD is a purposeful and focused organizational strategy that could be counterproductive if the accumulated HC does not have appropriate channels of utilization.

An important point to realize is that assigning employees to the right roles demand organizational authenticity. Authenticity is a measure of the congruence of the espoused and the perceived values of an organization (Cording et al., 2014). Because the HR practices of an organization affect corporate performance (Phipps et al., 2013; Teo, Reed, & Ly, 2014), managers must be authentic and consistently do the right thing. Following a quantitative approach based on stakeholders' theory, Cording et al. (2014) examined the factors that influenced employee productivity and corporate performance postmerger and acquisitions. Cording et al. submitted that organizational authenticity, measured as a function of consistency in espoused and perceived values, moderated the firm-wide employee productivity and long-term postmerger business performance. The effects of the failure of organizational authenticity on the personnel will affect customers and ultimately the business performance (Cording et al., 2014). Managers, therefore, need to demonstrate authenticity consistently in employee engagement. Employees must have some level of conviction that their job assignments are in the best interest of all stakeholders – themselves, as well as the company – to engender consistent top performance and organizational citizenship.

Organizational citizenship is an important business outcome with dedicated and appropriately engaged employees. Employee engagement enhances an employee's self-esteem and confidence and results in positive work-related outcomes. Such results included commitment, efficiency, the feeling of inclusiveness, and organizational citizenship (Chalofsky & Cavallaro, 2013; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, & Ilies, 2012). Unfortunately, HR practices in the THL industry are detrimental to the various elements of employee engagement (Popescu et al., 2013). This submission could imply that THL organizations are not deriving the maximum level of organizational commitment or citizenship from the employees.

Communication between the management and the workforce is another strategy to keep competent employees engaged. Based on the social exchange theory (SET), Karanges, Beatson, Johnston, and Lings (2014) in an investigation of the link between employee engagement and productivity pointed at the place of relationship. On internal communication, an employee relationship with the organization and with the immediate supervisor is critical (Karanges et al., 2014). These connections provide the influence channels to desirable organizational outcomes such as productivity, job satisfaction, and reduction in voluntary turnover (Karanges et al., 2014; Phipp et al., 2013). Communications with employees through various channels facilitate social integration and interactions that produce personal obligation, trust which enhance the company productivity (Karanges et al., 2014; Phipp et al., 2013). Managers, therefore, should maintain these communication channels especially on matters that affect the employees as stakeholders accountable for the productivity and the profit of the organization.

A further step in engaging a competent workforce and demonstrating authenticity is to include resourceful employees in organizational strategic planning and decision-making. Mande (2013) proposed the inclusion of an employees' representative on the board of directors of companies. Mande argued that employees' involvement is strategic because the practice resulted in the successful creation of value in companies and countries such as Germany and Japan. Employees are major business stakeholders as the wealth creators (Mande, 2013). Mande's submission agreed with Phipp et al. (2013) who qualitatively examined the role organizational culture plays in the development of an organization based on SET. Phipps et al. submitted that EI and OC were essential to positive change. EI elements included power, information, knowledge and skills, and reward while OC is employee's emotional attachment to his organization. An organization must be efficient by training and motivating her workforce and should promote HR management practices such as effective communication to enhance these variables (Phipp et al., 2013).

**Competitive advantage.** A productive organization would desire to have a competitive edge in her industry. In a review of the literature on the approaches to HRM, Anca-Ioana (2013) noted that the competitive advantage of an organization depended on her HRM. Good HRM develops the HC required to drive innovation, which is the most reliable lever for competitive advantage (Anca-Ioana, 2013; Darwish et al., 2013). Anca-Ioana argued further that a strategic, rather than an operational, approach to HRM, as a change in paradigm would retain the competent and motivated workforce. Shaw et al. (2013) also corroborated this claim through the submission that organizations needed internal capabilities as against external factors for competitive advantage. In this

dispensation, managers should focus on the HC as against tangible assets and financial resources (Anca-Ioana, 2013; Shaw et al., 2013). Strategic capability means a company has highly qualified and highly motivated staff able to deliver better business outcomes and build a knowledge-based organization than the competition (Anca-Ioana, 2013; Shaw et al., 2013). To excel in a competitive business such as the THL industry, practitioners should pay more attention to developing the HC.

The Romanian THL industry illustrates this position vividly. In examining the vector of competitiveness in the Romanian tourism enterprises, Ogarlaci (2012) deduced that the industry needed a long-term development of her HC. The intent of the proposal was for the Romanian THL industry to have a positive influence on the citizenry, the industry, and the country (Ogarlaci, 2012). Ogarlaci argued that HR was the essence of the hospitality offer because employees in different roles are the face of the organization that makes contact with customers. Organizational leaders, therefore, need to have a long-term view to developing their workforce for sterling interfacing with the customers (Ogarlaci, 2012). Personnel ought to deliver useful and efficient services because customers could interpret the service offer as synonymous to the identity or culture of the organization (Ogarlaci, 2012).

**Corporate profitability.** Productivity and competitive advantage must translate to profit. Daz-Fernandez, Lpez-Cabrales, and Valle-Cabrera (2014) argued that employees' competencies contributed to firm profitability and competitiveness. Daz-Fernandez et al. analyzed the HR and performance records of manufacturing companies with more than 500 employees and concluded that there are no best competencies. Rather, Daz-Fernandez et al. noted that the strategy of an organization determines the

best skills of the employees and that employee competency correlated with profitability. Hebert, Takupiwa, Honest, and Ephraim (2013) supported Daz-Fernandez et al. through a multiple case study on the survival strategy of small to medium enterprises (SME) during the economic downturn in Zimbabwe. Hebert et al. noted that SMEs might weather the storm of a financial crisis by maintaining a small but dedicated and motivated staff. The strategy was to keep these organizational talents empowered through training while making the job interesting by mapping responsibilities to core competencies. The HC of the companies analyzed was central to their survival in the economic downturn (Hebert et al., 2013).

Georgiadis and Pitelis (2012) analyzed some THL SMEs to investigate the relationship between the HC and firm performance. Among the findings was that many employees of micro and family THL businesses learned on the job and did not receive formal training (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2012). Despite the lack of formal training, the experiences of the entrepreneurs were strong positive predictors of their company profitability (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2012). However, Georgiadis and Pitelis noted that the relationship between HC and profitability might not be causal because of other factors that contribute to profitability, for example, gnarly remuneration. This submission implied that HC acquired through experience, essentially organizational-specific, is exigent to profitability.

**Corporate training program.** Organizations do not outsource all activities; many activities performed in-house require that the executors be competent. These executors, the organizations' employees, will need requisite training (Caruth, Haden, & Caruth, 2013). Such training is scarce in the THL industry when compared with other



high GDP industries (Iancu et al., 2013; I-Shuo, Zolfani, Rezaeiniya, & Aghdaie, 2012). The scarcity of THL training has a multiplier effect on other sectors. Darwish et al. (2013) examined HR management practices in the nonWestern economy of Jordan and submitted that HR practices like recruitment, training, and internal career prospects motivated staff and influenced employee turnover. Darwish et al. also opined that HC is essential to competitive advantage and that training, among sixteen HR best practices, had the most effect on productivity and financial performance. Whether organizational-specific or general-purpose, training holds a substantial economic benefit for every organization (Darwish et al., 2013).

Aragon and Sanz (2013) furthered the argument by examining the benefits of training business managers. Coming from the backdrop that training leads to a more successful organization, Aragon and Sanz argued that managers are important to business success and, therefore, require training. Following a quantitative approach, Aragon and Sanz tested four hypotheses and concluded that firms that trained their managers were significantly different from those that did not. The level of organizational involvement, innovativeness, and managerial abilities of managers trained were much higher than those that were not (Aragon & Sanz, 2013). However, Aragon and Sanz found no significant relationship between the numbers of trained managers in a company to the financial performance. The lack of correlation between the number trained and profitability could be indicative of other factors such as the type and quality of the training received. To deliver innovative and improved business performance, employees need training (Aragon & Sanz, 2013), but managers should pay attention to the training content and the value derived. Rees (2013) corroborated this line of thought noting that employed adults need

to commit to the continuous development of their HC to meet the challenges of the innovative global economy.

**Requisite to service innovation.** Sustaining organizational performance and profitability may require being innovative. Based on the HCT, Fox and Royle (2014) carried out a regression analysis between innovation, the HC, research and development (R&D), and advertising. Fox and Royle operationalized the dependent variable, innovation, as the average industry ranking of an organization by its industry experts. The dependent variable data was from Fortune's most admired companies (MAC) while the independent variables data were from a database of the financial records of many goods and services companies from different industries. Fox and Royle concluded that HC investment was a better predictor of organizational innovativeness than traditional R&D and marketing. That is to say, investing in HC through employee training, remuneration and other benefits fostered innovation and resulted in competitive advantage (Fox & Royle, 2014; Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2012). Fox and Royle significantly advanced the argument for the HCT, but a drawback of the argument was that not everyone might agree with the interpretation of Fortune's ranking as a proxy for innovation.

Giannopoulou, Gryszkiewicz, and Barlatier (2014) viewing from a practitioner's perspective saw creativity as the essential condition for innovation. In a multiple case study of three research and technology (service-based) organizations (RTOs), Giannopoulou et al. found that attracting the right people is essential to creativity in service delivery. An irony in the finding was that personnel turnover is a positive factor for creativity because of the reflux of knowledge and ideas occasioned by changing people (Giannopoulou et al., 2014). Giannopoulou et al. submitted that to be innovative

and to provide ingenious direction to organizations, RTOs maintain the right balance between creativity and commercialization. In other words, organizations that aim to be leading edge would engage or develop creative persons otherwise will have to engage consultants.

Innovation helps offer more value to the customer than the competition does. Kanten and Yaşlıoğlu (2012) conducted a 5–interval Likert-type, 10-question survey among 199 hotel managers in Turkey and found that there is a significant relationship between innovation in services, and customer value. The successful implementation of creative ideas and new technologies as a differentiation strategy would keep a company at pace with customer demands and would be a competitive advantage (Kanten & Yaşlıoğlu, 2012; Nagy, 2012). Kuo and Chao (2014) supported the argument in the study of the innovative behavior of service-based SMEs, including 103 tourism and food organizations. Kuo and Chao noted that about equal halves of the service innovation projects embarked upon by the organizations in the study focused on gaining new customers in the existing and new markets. THL businesses need to attract customers; therefore, developing THL industry employees to be innovative to influence customer behavior (Lee & Oh, 2014) is imperative.

Following an exploratory approach, Nagy (2012) carried out a review of the extant literature on tourism and hospitality innovations from 1997 to 2011 to identify the main research areas. Nagy crystallized the findings of 17 authors from 1997 to 2011 into three broad dimensions of innovation – human, financial, and organizational. The main findings of the study included that tourism innovation study is relatively new and that most of the innovations in tourism were technologies developed in, or for, other

industries (Nagy, 2012). Hjalager's (2015) exploration of the 100 innovations that transformed tourism agreed with Nagy's findings.

Hjalager (2015) reviewed innovation literature over several years, including research texts and the history of science and technology to make a compilation of the 100 innovations adjudged most significant to tourism. Starting with the introduction of the travel passport in 1414 to the Avatar-embodied agent in 2012, Hjalager presented a paragraph narrative each of the innovations and their influence on tourism. The influence was in a combination of any of seven areas including changing the goods and services offered by tourism, increasing productivity, creating new destinations, and enhancing tourists' mobility (Hjalager, 2015). The most revolutionary innovations listed were the railway, the automobile, the passenger aircraft, the World Wide Web, and the social media (Hjalager, 2015). Each of the high-impact innovations achieved six out of seven possible areas of enhancing tourists' experiences (Hjalager, 2015). Notably, all the innovations emanated from outside the THL industry (Anamaria & Maria-Cristina, 2013; Hjalager, 2015). The THL industry, therefore, needs to take up the challenge of HCD to enhance internal capabilities and creativity to be more innovative, and to improve profitability.

### **The Implications of HCD to THL Employees**

**Enhances employees' productivity.** Productive workers are the primary evidence of an organization's HCD program. HC are the stock of abilities, knowledge, skills, social assets, and values acquired and developed through educational processes (Khan et al., 2015). The educational process may be schooling, training, and professional programs, through which a person can gain knowledge that translates to productivity

(Khan et al., 2015). Employees first realize these values in themselves before they convert the same to organizational productivity, own benefit, and societal development (Schulz et al., 2013). Hotels with structured and elaborate training plans differentiated themselves from the competition and paraded stronger and more motivated workforce (Ubeda-Garcia, Marco-Lajara, Sabater-Sempere, & Garcia-Lillo, 2013). For this reason, such hotels enjoyed more customer loyalty with lesser complaints, and the chief executives have a perception of higher productivity (Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2013). To this end, hotels' training schemes should focus boosting staff productivity, reinforcing organizational culture, and increasing staff responsibilities in the organization (Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2013). Such focus on HRD could contribute to higher productivity as was experienced in Saudi Arabia (Sillah, 2015). HRD could also influence the translation of an organization's leadership style to positive business performance (Alsughayir, 2014).

**Improves employees' earning.** The level of education a person attains could have an influence on the individual's income. Koerselman and Uusitalo (2014) analyzed the risk and benefit of HC investments through a correlation between the levels of education and lifetime income using secondary data of residents of Finland from 1988 to 2009. With HCT as the theoretical framework for estimating the lifetime income of a population, Koerselman and Uusitalo found out that education produces marketable skills but that investment in education is not without risks. University education yielded substantially higher lifetime income when compared with vocational high school and basic mandatory level of education, but the difference in the latter two was not much (Koerselman & Uusitalo, 2014). Higher income appears to correlate with a greater level of education.

Cornacchione and Daugherty (2013) and Mertens and Robken (2013) supported this argument quantitatively by investigating the benefits of postsecondary education, particularly with respect to the financial return. A common inference by the two pairs of authors, Cornacchione and Daugherty, and Mertens and Robken was that differences in people's earnings could be a result of the differences in their HC. The HC differences could be economic, cultural, technical, or communicative (Cornacchione & Daugherty, 2013; Mertens & Robken, 2013). Education is an investment that attracts cost in the present, but that increases work productivity and the lifetime income of the educated (Mertens & Robken, 2013). For instance, Mertens and Robken noted that though the remuneration varies between industries, doctorate holders earn higher wages and put in longer hours at work. Employees with high HC could influence their organization to receive high compensation based on their past performance. An example was the pay rise of college football coaches during the global financial crisis (Inoue et al., 2013).

Other authors also contributed to the argument that there is a positive relationship between HC and total compensation. Inoue et al. (2013) concurred but added that the relationship was inverse proportion with increasing bonus. Tamasauskiene and Poteliene (2013) evaluated the internal rate of return (IRR) on HCD in Lithuania compared with other countries and showed that persons that benefited from government education subsidy have a higher IRR. Government-educated persons had an IRR from 12.2% to 14% while persons not educated had IRR from 8.4% to 9.8% (Tamasauskiene & Poteliene, 2013). The maximum IRR achieved by the uneducated was below the minimum realized by the educated, which supported the role education plays in wage differentials (Inoue et al., 2013; Tamasauskiene & Poteliene, 2013).

Notably, the knowledge and competence of employees may not be the only or the most significant reason for good business performance. I-Shuo et al. (2012) observed that for hotels, location was the utmost factor, followed in sequence by security, price, room, the front desk, service quality, and facilities. Arasli (2012) named leadership as the important factor affecting the THL industry business performance, while other authors listed innovation (Kanten & Yaşlıoğlu, 2012; Nagy, 2012). Some others submitted food quality, reliability, responsiveness, and empathy (Marinescu & Ispas, 2012; Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2012). These authors explored different areas of the THL businesses in various regions of the world but not in West Africa, which supports the need for similar studies in this block. Meanwhile, the importance of HC resonated through the factors the authors enumerated. A study focused on HCD might yield an additional understanding of how the THL industry in Nigeria could leverage HCD to improve the factors.

### **Transition and Summary**

Most of the themes affecting business performance in the THL industry are traceable to the HC employed in the industry. I provided a problem statement on the challenge of not developing the HC in the THL industry and outlined the implications of HCD at different levels based on current research. According to the studies reviewed the country, the THL organizations, and the individual employee's stand to benefit from HCD. In Section 2, I will present the purpose of the research, my role as the researcher, the research participants, and a description of the research method and design. I will expatiate on the study population, the selection of participants, and the ethical conduct of the research. Other topics in the section will include a description of the data collection instrument, data organization and analysis techniques, and the strategy to ensure

reliability and validity. Section 3 will include the findings, the application of the study to professional practice; the implications for social change, research recommendations, further studies required, and the conclusion.



## Section 2: The Project

Globally, the Nigerian tourism, hospitality, and leisure industry ranks 21<sup>st</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup> position in the provision of employment and contribution to the GDP, respectively (WEF, 2015). It was imperative for leaders of the industry to be aware of the strategies to improve the business performance to close the gap between the rankings in size and productivity. This section of the study includes the purpose statement and the descriptions of my role as the researcher, the participants, the research method, and the research design.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore HC productivity strategies used by THL business leaders in Nigeria that have improved employee productivity. This population was appropriate for this study because the leadership strategies of high-performing companies in an area could be beneficial to the others in the region (Mirocha, Bents, LaBrosse, & Rietow, 2013). The data from this study may contribute to social change by providing a framework for THL leaders in southern Nigeria to invest in developing future leaders of the industry. As a result, the career prospects and social status of the employees might improve; the employee turnover rate and the attendant losses of Africa's fourth employer of labor might reduce (WTTC, 2015a).

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the researcher selects the appropriate research design and the methods of data collection and analysis (Pettigrew, 2013). I selected the participants, collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data from this research. I prepared a set of criteria

that defined the eligible participants from the population of THL managers in southern Nigeria and conducted the face-to-face, semistructured interviews to collect the data. I had individual participants check the data they provided before proceeding to analyze and interpret the result. The observation and interpretation of a social phenomenon are dependent on the notion of the observing agent (Zachariadis, Scott, & Barrett, 2013). I consciously ensured my prior knowledge of the industry and personal biases did not deliberately, or inadvertently, influence my conduct of the study.

I live in southern Nigeria and own a hospitality small business in western Nigeria. My personal experience of poor service delivery in the Nigerian THL industry, the dormant regulatory framework, and the scarcity of academic and THL industry training programs led to an assumption that Nigerian THL organizations may not be delivering the professional services customers deserve. Also, my experience as a chartered energy engineer in southern Nigeria gave rise to another assumption that the Nigeria THL industry can be one that is more productive if the employees have structured competence-based development and a functional professional organization like the oil and gas professionals.

To minimize the effect of my biases and prior knowledge, I accepted all data provided by the participants. A researcher can reduce the interference of personal biases and prior insights by bracketing, that is, setting aside own views and accepting the participants' views and evidence even when contrary to own perception (Bhati et al., 2014). To ensure I captured all the responses of the participants, I solicited and obtained written informed consent to audio-record the interviews and had the participants check the transcripts for completeness and accuracy. These precautions enhanced an authentic

gathering of the participants' knowledge and experiences without bias. One participant, a legal and HR professional, declined audio recording but spoke at a pace comfortable for me to record her responses to the interview questions.

Social research must be ethical. In 1979, The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research published guideline, the Belmont report, came to effect (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services [HHS], 2014). The report provided an overview of three requirements to conduct research involving human subjects in an ethical manner (HHS, 2014). The guideline requires that human research complies with the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (HHS, 2014). To respect the personality and to protect the privacy of the participants, I ensured confidentiality of the participants by conducting the interviews in different safe and secure locations nominated by the participants. I anonymized all information obtained through direct contact or from documents the participants provided (Cho & Shin, 2014; Sque, Walker, & Long-Sutehall, 2014; Wu & Ko, 2013; Yin, 2014). I maintained an ethical and a trusted relationship with the participants by providing an unambiguous written introduction of myself, and an overview of the purpose of the research (Sque et al., 2014).

In addition, to keep with the principle of beneficence, I respected the participants' decisions and provided adequate protection (HHS, 2014). No participant was below age 18, or a person I can influence directly or otherwise (Wu & Ko, 2013). I solicited and obtained the participants' written informed consent to audio-record the interviews, and to make use of anonymized statements in my report (Cho & Shin, 2014; Sque et al., 2014). The participants had the liberty not to answer any question they were not willing to and

were able to terminate the research at any time (Yin, 2014). No participant opted out, and none declined any question. To ensure justice, the choice of participants was according to preset criteria that allowed an equal probability of selecting qualifying participants without taking advantage of any persons (HHS, 2014). I took appropriate precautions on treating human subjects ethically during the study (Yin, 2014).

Consistent with selecting and treating participants equally, is the requirement to conduct the interviews following a predetermined structure, an interview protocol. The interview protocol enhances the reliability of a case study (Yin, 2014). The procedure in the interview protocol provided definitive steps of carrying out the interaction with participants and served as an aide memoir to facilitate consistency in the study as I interviewed different participants (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014).

### **Participants**

To address the research question, the participants in this study were leaders, managers, or directors of the THL industry in southern Nigeria selected through purposive sampling. Social scientists use purposive sampling in qualitative research to achieve homogeneity when a priori theoretical knowledge requires that individuals with certain characteristics be essential to the phenomenon under research (Robinson, 2014). The participants had sufficient insights about the industry and experience of the phenomenon and provided information that supported the conceptual framework (Cho & Shin, 2014; Yin, 2014). Marchante and Ortega (2012) gained more clarity in a similar study by eliminating hotel employees with less than 5 year experience from their study population. Therefore, the participants in this study had a minimum of 9 years full-time or part-time experience in the THL industry in southern Nigeria.

In consonance with Kim and Park (2014) choice of a major international airline to study the competencies required of airline staff, I also selected leaders from commercially viable THL organizations. The hospitality subsector appears the most active in the Nigerian THL industry (Jakada & Gambo, 2014). Therefore, the participants were managers of major organizations in the subsector, that is, hotels with functional restaurants, providing hospitality services to the public, government parastatals, and corporate multinationals. However, contrary to Kim and Park, I selected managers from three consenting organizations. To reach the participants, I approached some THL organizations that met the requirement with an introductory dossier. The folder contained the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, a cover letter from the University, the purpose of the research, and a letter of invitation to participate in the research. The pack also contained my contact information with phone numbers from two local mobile networks, my Walden University email address, and an acknowledgment docket (Sque et al., 2014).

Having secured the consent of a THL organization management to interview the manager, I established rapport through an ethical, cordial and trust relationship with the participant. Voluntary participation built on rapport is effective to get valuable information through an interview (Cho & Shin, 2014; Driskell, Blickensderfer, & Salas, 2013; McDermid, Peters, Jackson, & Daly, 2014). I conducted the interviews in the private locations where the participants work to create the opportunity for participant and site observations (Yin, 2014) and to be able to record organization-based evidence the participant may wish to share. The interview questions were friendly and nonthreatening “what” and “how”, and not “why” questions that could elicit defensiveness (Yin, 2014).

Participants reviewed the responses provided to the questions. After that, I sent the participants personal letters of appreciation and the abstract of the study at completion (Sque et al., 2014). I did not provide any form of incentive to any participants to participate.

### **Research Method and Design**

Scholars in social research use three structured approaches, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Yin, 2014). The appropriate approach is always the means to address the research question and the purpose of the research adequately (Cameron et al., 2013; Pettigrew, 2013). Quantitative and mixed methods depend on existing knowledge and are often used to test hypotheses and for studying relationships between variables (Cameron et al., 2013; Wester et al., 2013). Whereas qualitative inquiry affords seeking new or in-depth understanding of the experiences of participants in sociocultural, psychological, and emotional dimensions (Miner-Romanoff, 2012).

### **Research Method**

I used qualitative research methodology because the research question required exploring the knowledge and experiences of managers of the THL industry in southern Nigeria. Bailey (2013) specifically noted that qualitative research methodology provides this opportunity for interaction by way of face-to-face or telephone interviews. Research on the THL industry is still at infancy (Melissen, 2013), and none is available on the southern Nigeria THL industry productivity and HCD. To respond to the call of Jakada and Gambo (2014) for the Nigerian THL industry players to explore the internal capabilities of the industry, interaction with the industry leaders was imperative.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods are two contrasting schools of thought about social research. While qualitative research method lends itself to social constructivism or idiographic approach, quantitative methodology, and by extension mixed methods, are experimental and nomothetic (Bhati et al., 2014). The latter two methods are not appropriate to address the study research question that required an idiographic approach to understanding the peculiar and subjective experiences of different business leaders (Bhati et al., 2014). Quantitative and mixed methods approaches are nomothetic. The methods abstract the real world in statistical measures to test hypotheses, to predict, and to generalize observations from one population and context to others (Bhati et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). The focus of this study was first to understand what and how of leadership strategies but not to attempt to predict or generalize existing knowledge. Therefore, qualitative methodology was most suitable.

### **Research Design**

Following the selection of an appropriate research method is the choice of the right research design. Qualitative research method comes in different designs that are appropriate for different contexts and research questions. Qualitative research designs include ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and case study (Miner-Romanoff, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). Ethnography entails extensive fieldwork and cultural connotation, and grounded theory design is applicable in developing theories from the analysis of the elements of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). These two methods are not suitable to address the research question. Phenomenology and case study designs involve exploring the perceptions and experiences of participants through interviews and are the suitable alternatives for the research.

A case study design is the most applicable in the context of exploring the localized experiences of a focused group of people. Phenomenology is more appropriate where the research intent is to generalize empirically over a population, and would require a larger number of participants than in a case study (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014). For instance, Blank, Harries, and Reynolds (2011), and Sinden et al. (2013) respectively explored the lived experiences of comparatively larger populations, juvenile convicts and women firefighters. The members of these homogenous populations possibly have related experiences. Therefore, a phenomenological inquiry was most suitable to obtain the participants' knowledge and experiences and to generalize empirically over the populations (Bengtsson & Hertting, 2014). On the other hand, case study design is most appropriate where the participants are relatively few and having unique experiences, and where the research intent is contextual (Bengtsson & Hertting, 2014). Therefore, I selected a case study design to explore the strategies leaders of the THL industry in southern Nigeria applied to enhance HC productivity and improve business performance.

Case study design can be descriptive, explanatory, or exploratory. Exploratory case study design affords the understanding of the *what* and *how* of complex business phenomena or concepts (Yin, 2014). The design can be comparative, and is common in international business (Tsang, 2013). This capability afforded the opportunity to explore the productivity strategies THL management were using to develop employee skills to enhance productivity while also providing an explanation about how the strategies enhanced productivity and firm performance. I discovered themes from the convergence of the views of the participants.



Lopes and Teixeira (2013) in a study of productivity, employee wages, and the return on training investment submitted that firms having a higher level of productivity offer more intensive training than those that do not. The former have a higher number of employees and capital intensity, have personnel with a higher level of education and skills, and experience longer tenure (Lopes & Teixeira, 2013). Leadership is a strategic and a critical factor for hospitality business excellence (Arasli, 2012). Therefore, I selected notable major THL organizations having well educated and experienced leaders from two major cities in the southeast and the south-south subregions of southern Nigeria.

Data saturation and convergence or triangulation, are required validity indicators in qualitative research. To achieve data saturation, I aimed to achieve breadth and depth in the research inquiry. I interviewed more participants until additional participants contributed no new or no significantly different information (Cassell & Symon, 2011; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013) and achieved saturation after the third interview. Triangulation may involve comparing data from multiple sources of evidence (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Yin, 2014). The comparison could either be to determine the completeness of data, to increase confidence in the findings, or to enhance the understanding of the study (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Yin, 2014). For triangulation, I selected the participants in sequence such that they fell into three different categories of THL organizations and different levels of leadership. One of the organizations was independent private-owned, the second independent public-owned while the third was private-owned and belonged to a chain. The leaders from the organizations were an owner-CEO with a doctorate degree, a lawyer and an HR professional in the top management hierarchy, and a middle-level manager

holding a first degree, respectively. I also obtained documents such as employee training manual and conducted observations including employees' induction, employee performance at work, and emergency drill at the organizations to substantiate the information provided by the leaders during the interviews.

I reviewed and triangulated the information from each case with one another and with respect to the conceptual framework and the research question. Appendices D to F are the NVivo comparison charts of the themes from the first and the second, the second and the third, and the first and the third participants. The charts show that a combination of the themes from the first and second participant covered all the themes from the third participant demonstrating the completeness of the data (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Yin, 2014). The contributions by the participants aligned with the argument of Mertens and Robken (2013) that persons with higher education possess higher HC and productivity.

### **Population and Sampling**

Sampling in qualitative case study research involves setting inclusion criteria that qualify a case for the study. This study's objective of knowing the strategies that the leaders of THL in southern Nigeria use to develop the HC and enhance productivity requires that the participants have sufficient knowledge of the phenomenon. The selection of the participants was through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to set predefined criteria to select homogeneous participants with sufficient experience of the phenomenon under study (Robinson, 2014) and who are willing to share the same.

For this research, I selected the participants from a target population of THL leaders in southern Nigeria. The participants were persons older than age 18 in

compliance with the Belmont report on carrying out research with human subjects (HHS, 2014). The participants had more than the minimum 5 year full time or part time experience as managers or owners of their organization to enhance confidence in the data (Marchante and Ortega, 2012). Persons participating in research must have sufficient knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Kusari, Hoeffler, & Iacobucci, 2013; Wu & Ko, 2013). The participants' organizations had structured and functional HCD programs consistent with the study conceptual framework (Robinson, 2014). Add summary to fully synthesize and conclude the paragraph.

Following the selection of the right sample is the selection of the right number of participants to address the research question adequately (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Qualitative methodologists agree that there is no standard sample size but a school of thought advocates that the sample should yield sufficient data for data saturation. Data saturation is the condition when no new information or theme derives from more interviews or the examination of new data sources (Hammer & Berland, 2014; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). If the population is inadequate to provide saturation in the range of opinion and the wealth of information provided by the participants, a qualitative researcher could be flexible in the size of the sample universe, and could increase the size to explore a concept adequately (Pettigrew, 2013; Robinson, 2014). Increasing the number of participants might also demonstrate rigor, enhance the validity and the transferability of the findings, or facilitate the coherence between the research question, the purpose and the conceptual framework (Pettigrew, 2013; Robinson, 2014). Whereas a researcher can gain an understanding of a social mechanism from a single case study (Bengtsson & Hertting, 2014), I selected more participants until I achieved saturation. I

interviewed three high HC participants for this study—a CEO-owner, a top HR manager, and a middle-level manager to accomplish data saturation, for transferability, and to enhance the understanding of HCD (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Robinson, 2014; Yin, 2014) in the THL industry.

### **Ethical Research**

An ethical conduct of social research involving human subjects requires that the process should comply with the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (HHS, 2014; Irwin, 2013). Respect for persons requires first that the researcher and the process of research should protect the participants' autonomy or the right to self-determination (HHS, 2014; McDermid et al., 2014). The researcher should not only ensure no harm to the human subjects of the research but also maximize the benefits while minimizing the possibility of harm (HHS, 2014; Yin, 2014). Thirdly, there should be mutual beneficence, that is, equal distribution of the burden and the benefits of the research between researcher and the participants (HHS, 2014; McDermid et al., 2014). I ensured the conduct of this study met the ethics of research with the human subject by complying with these principles.

Ethical research should assure fairness in the selection of the participants, and mitigate the participants' exposure to different risk types. I selected the participants giving equal opportunity to male and female as much as possible. The first and third participants were males while the second was a female. The exposure of participants to harm was relatively less in this research than in other social research. Nonetheless, I assured the participants of safety and confidentiality and provided them the interview questions in advance. I explained the benefits of the research to the participants,

including but not limited to potential contribution to the knowledge of developing the HC and the productivity of tourism and hospitality employees and the THL industry. I did not provide any incentive to influence the decision of the participants to support the research or to enhance their contributions.

Next, I complied with the principle of respect for persons. I provided sufficient information so that the participants could decide to join or not, and to provide consent (Irwin, 2013; McDermid et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Only persons capable of self-determination that is, above the age of 18, without any form of diminished autonomy (HHS, 2014), and without any obligation to me participated. All participants expressed willingness to be part of the research by completing and signing the informed consent form in Appendix A. The second participant declined voice recording, and I obliged. She, however, responded to the questions such that I was able to record her contributions.

In addition to providing informed consent, participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time with or without notice, and without any negative consequence. To further respect the confidentiality of the participants, I anonymized the participants and organizations in the research documentation. I will keep the records, paper documents, audio recordings and encrypted data, in a safe lock accessible to me alone, for 5 years to provide an audit trail if needed (Carlson, 2010). After that, I will delete all files stored on computer media, and burn all paper documents.

## **Data Collection**

### **Instruments**

As the researcher, I was the primary data collector and used face-to-face semistructured interviews lasting a maximum of 45 minutes per participant to collect the

research data. Qualitative researchers use the in-depth interview among other methods to explore what and how of human behavior and phenomena (Bailey, 2014). I prepared and followed an interview protocol to facilitate consistency in the interview experiences of the participants, and to ensure the responses aligned with the research question. The interview protocol had the systematic procedure to interact with the participants with steps including stating the background to the study, answering the participants' questions, asking the interview questions, and concluding the interview. The interview protocol and the interview questions are located in Appendix B and Appendix C respectively.

Yin (2014) and Moustakas (1994) submitted that an interview protocol would enhance the reliability of a case study. The procedure in the interview protocol provided definitive steps of carrying out the interaction with the participants (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014). The interview protocol also served as an aide memoir that facilitated consistency and reliability in the exercise (Yin, 2014). A guideline with clear steps for other researchers to follow to repeat a study to achieve the same or near outcomes would earn the confidence of the research community for its reliability (Schmiedel et al., 2014; Straub, Boudreau, & Gefen, 2004). The interview protocol in Appendix B could produce the same or close outcomes with each independent application if the researcher follows the steps outlined.

Meanwhile, the interview protocol should also be valid (Schmiedel et al., 2014). Validity means the instrument is right. The instrument must align with the conceptual framework, by measuring the themes of the particular theory with a transparent evidence of theoretical grounding (Hammer & Berland, 2014; Pettigrew, 2013). The instrument must address the purpose of the research and the problem statement (Hammer & Berland,

2014; Pettigrew, 2013). Validity also implies that the interview protocol can serve as a proper means of collecting qualitative records that would support achieving the research objective (Hammer & Berland, 2014; Pettigrew, 2013; Yin, 2014). For validity, I ensured the questions in the instrument explored key constructs on the HCT such as training, education, competence, and remuneration (Schulz et al., 2013). I did transcript review and member checking (Carlson, 2010), that is, I allowed the participants to check and confirm that the transcripts of the responses they provided to the interview questions were correct and congruent with their understanding.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The data collection involved face-to-face interview of consenting participants following the interview protocol. Face-to-face interview affords the qualitative researcher the advantage of human interaction that might provide the opportunity to record the nuances of the interview moments but might also lead to inhibition on the part of some participants (Carlson, 2010; Sinden et al., 2013). I conducted the interviews at a location free from distractions, and that ensures the privacy of the participants. Researchers should respect the differential privacy of participants such that the research outcome is independent of a particular participant; third parties should not decipher the participation or not of any person (Heffetz & Ligett, 2014).

I recorded the interviews with two apps installed on a password-enabled mobile device. I transcribed the recordings into text manually and had the participants review the materials for accuracy. For each interview, with the NVivo software, I generated codes following the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen methodology (Moustakas, 1994). The interview transcripts will be in my password-protected personal computer for 5 years

after then I will delete them. I obtained anonymous company documents including training materials and conducted site observations. I triangulated the information from the participants with one another, and with the observations made on site.

### **Data Organization Techniques**

Qualitative data are the records, verbal data, video recordings and transcripts; observations, and gestures recorded in journals before coding (Hammer & Berland, 2014). A credible qualitative research will have a rich, well-organized and auditable data that aligns with the study interview protocol, the codes, and the study theoretical underpinning (Carlson, 2010; Hammer & Berland, 2014). With sufficiently structured data provided, readers can repeat the same methodology to substantiate or dispute the research claims (Hammer & Berland, 2014). A transparent organization of qualitative data may demonstrate rigor, which to some quantitative methodologist, appears lacking in qualitative research (Bhati et al., 2014).

In the light of this, I organized all data from the research transparently. I saved the interview transcripts using an anonymized file naming convention containing the sequential interview numbers, the date, the location, and the context of the interviews. I used color highlights and margin notes to identify significant statements and differentiated the codes from the interviews. I used tables and appendices to provide clarity and more information where required. I stored the research documentation, paper and password-protected encrypted electronic copies locked safe for 5 years.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

Data analysis is a challenging process in qualitative research and is a least-developed aspect of case study methodology (Yin, 2014). An appropriate method of



analysis is essential to discover themes that adequately address the research question. In the inductive approach, a researcher can extract themes from the interviews as well as from the extant literature, theoretical orientations, and the researcher's experiences (Cassell & Symon, 2011). Authors have analyzed qualitative studies following this approach. Therefore, I adopted the same approach in this study. Specifically, I applied the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method (Moustakas, 1994) to generate the codes from each interview.

I analyzed the data manually and rigorously using the interview questions (Yin, 2014). The analysis involved extracting significant statements and expressions from the interview transcripts in response to the interview questions (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014). I wrote memos based on the significant statements stating what the experiences or perceptions of the participant were. After that, I created meaning units from the memos. I eliminated repeated meaning units and merged similar ones to form invariant codes grouped into themes.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are two consistent requirements recommended by most authors on the subject of research quality (Ali & Yusof, 2011; Bryman, Becker, & Sempik, 2008). These quality requirements apply to all approaches of qualitative inquiry – case study, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative, and phenomenology. In qualitative research, the community of social researchers agreed that validity, reliability, and credibility are relevant quality criteria (Bryman et al., 2008).

**Reliability**

A quality research must follow accepted approach to inquiry suitable for the study and must be replicable by other researchers. Reliability is the extent to which other researchers can replicate the findings of a study (Ali &Yusof, 2011). This criterion is the integral of the requirements to comply with the research community guidelines. I used the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen (Moustakas, 1994) methodology for data analysis to ensure repeatability by other researchers.

**Validity**

Qualitative validity involves the consistent application of the interview protocol and documenting the validation procedure upfront (Slevitch, 2011). Participants in the actual interviews had the research questions in advance and validated the interview transcripts and my interpretation through transcript review and member checking. The result was undistorted by a priori knowledge (Biswas, 2012). I ensured adequate mitigations against threats to data validity by recording the setting, the participants' expressions, their contradictory responses, my bias as a researcher, and the dilemma I faced in the study in a journal. Participant's body language could provide insight into actual practices or the research question. These steps aided the study internal validity.

The second dimension of validity in qualitative research is external validity. External validity concerns the extent to which the study result applies to spheres beyond the influence of the researcher, that is, its generalizability (Ali &Yusof, 2011). Important to realize, however, that generalizability is not a collectively accepted quality criterion in qualitative research (Ali &Yusof, 2011; Yin, 2014). Although welcomed by experienced researchers, young researchers do not see from the same perspective (Ali &Yusof, 2011).

The interviews involved leaders of different THL organizations, the consistency of the interview results, that is the codes generated from the interviews were checks for external validity. To further check for external validity, I compared the codes from the study with the extant literature to check how the outcomes relate to experiences in other regions of the world.

Data saturation occurs when additional participants contribute no new or no significantly different opinion or information (Cassell & Symon, 2011; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Data saturation is a requirement that supports the credibility of qualitative research (Cassell & Symon, 2011; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). A qualitative researcher could increase the number of participants until data saturation and to explore a phenomenon or concept adequately (Pettigrew, 2013; Robinson, 2014). Therefore, I started with one participant and increased the number by one until the third participant provided no significantly new opinion or information.

### **Transition and Summary**

This section covered essential topics in this study. First, I restated the purpose statement of the research, my role as the researcher and the criteria used to select the participants. I furthered by providing the actions I took to achieve a credible outcome in keeping with the practice of qualitative research. I explained the research methodology and design, the population and method of sampling and, how I complied with expected research ethics. The discussion on the reliability and validity of the research concluded the section. In Section 3, I presented a short introduction then the findings from the study, the application of the findings to professional practice, the implications of the study for social change, and recommendations for future academic work.

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

Section 3 starts with an overview then the findings of this case study. The section also includes (a) a summary of the data, (b) the data analysis, (c) application to professional practice, (e) implication of the study findings for social change, (f) recommendations for action, (g) recommendations for future research, and (h) the study conclusion.

#### **Overview of Study**

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore HC productivity strategies used by THL business leaders in Nigeria that have improved employee productivity. I used qualitative research method because the methodology was appropriate to answer the research question on the HCD strategies THL leaders in Nigeria use to improve employee productivity. The research question requires interacting with THL leaders to explore their knowledge and experiences, which qualitative research methodology affords (Bailey, 2013). I conducted one-on-one, semistructured interviews with THL leaders in southern Nigeria and recorded observations at their workplaces to gather data to answer the research question. To extract pieces of evidence to address the research question, I asked the participants the following questions:

1. Briefly describe your experience in the THL industry with respect to HCD.
2. What are, and how do your organization HRM strategies improve employee productivity?
3. How do your organization HC productivity strategies affect your employees?
4. How do your organization HC productivity strategies affect employee turnover?

5. How do your organization HC productivity strategies affect corporate business performance?
6. How can THL leaders make the industry attractive to future employees?
7. What additional question should I ask on how to improve employee productivity and corporate business performance?

In addition, I asked the following follow-up question:

8. What challenges does your organization face in developing your employee HC?

I conducted triangulation to confirm the completeness of the data and to increase confidence in the finding (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Yin, 2014) by comparing the data from the different categories of leaders—a chief executive officer and owner, a top management leader, and a middle-level manager. I compared the data from one southeast organization with those of two south-south organizations and also compared the participants' data with observations made on site. Following the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen methodology (Moustakas, 1994) and using the software NVivo as a tool, I extracted significant statements from the transcribed interview scripts, generated codes and then grouped the codes into themes. Seventeen themes emerged from the analysis, which, based on the observed pattern in the data, I classified under three headings – challenges, strategies, and business outcomes. I further subdivided the challenges into macroeconomic and microeconomic.

Five themes addressed the research question on the strategy used by THL leaders to improve employee productivity while six themes, four macroeconomic and two microeconomic, relate to the challenges the industry faces in the areas of HCD. Six themes fell into the business outcomes of implementing HCD strategies.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

I conducted the methodological triangulation for this study by comparing data from different categories of THL organizations, across leadership hierarchy of the industry leaders, and by comparing data from organizations from two subregions of southern Nigeria. I also compared the data from the interviews with observations conducted at the sites, and with the content of a training manual. I collected the data to address the research question: “What HCD strategies have THL leaders in Nigeria used to improve employee productivity?” I analyzed the data from a participant before interviewing the next and stopped after the third participant because there was no new theme from the third interview when compared with the second and the first. The data from site observations were similar across the sites. I coded the names of the study participants as P1, P2, and P3. All three participants confirmed their responses.

I used qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, to analyze the data following the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen methodology (Moustakas, 1994). I generated 236 significant statements from the interviews and grouped them into codes. By grouping similar codes based on the literature reviewed, I created 17 themes. Five of the themes emerging from the study primarily addressed the research question. The other 12 themes did not address the research question directly but related to the main themes when viewed in the context of the literature, the conceptual framework, and the actual experiences of the participants. On the research question, the themes fell into three broad categories: challenges, strategies, and business outcomes. I further classified the challenges into macroeconomic and microeconomic themes in alignment with the literature. The frequencies of the

challenges, the strategies, and the business outcomes themes are on Table 1. The themes are on Table 2.

Table 1

*Frequency of themes on HCD in southern Nigeria*

Categories of Themes	Frequency	Percentage of Total
Challenges		
Macroeconomic	53	22.46
Microeconomic	28	11.86
Strategies	82	33.90
Business Outcomes	74	31.78
Total	236	100.00

Table 2

*Themes on HCD in southern Nigeria*

		Themes	
Challenges		Strategies	Business Outcomes
Macro-economic	Micro-economic		
Policy and Governance Failures	Character of Potential Employees	Remuneration, Reward, and Recognition	Employee Productivity
Insecurity	Lack of Interest in THL as a Career	Training	Corporate Reputation
Negative Industry Perception		Resourcing Practices and Use of Temporary Workers	Employee Turnover
Poor Power Infrastructure		Technology	Customer Satisfaction
		Institutionalizing Ethics and Compliance	Cost Escalation
			Slow Growth



The findings of this study were consistent with the position of Seong-O and Patterson (2014) that studies on HCD should consider three levels: the individual (supply side), the organization (demand side), and the country (supply and demand sides). The microeconomic challenges themes, the strategies and business outcome themes, and the macroeconomic challenges themes fitted these categories respectively. Additionally, from Table 1, the occurrence of THL industry challenges themes at the country (demand and supply) level nearly doubled those at the employees (supply) at the microeconomic level. In addition, the findings also indicated that in formulating strategies for HCD, the THL industry leaders should give attention to challenges and the expected or resulting business outcomes; the overall thematic occurrences in the three areas were near equal at 33.90%, 34.32%, and 31.78% respectively (see Table 1). The findings also affirmed the argument of other authors that favorable policy and governance are indispensable to expected industry outcomes at the macroeconomic, organizational, and microeconomic levels (Fayos-Solá, Marín, & Jafari, 2014; Moscardo, 2014; Panahi, Mamipour, & Nazari, 2015). The interview questions tailored towards human capacity development and corporate productivity. Nonetheless, the participants mentioned macroeconomic challenges a fifth (22.46%) of the time (see Table 1).

### **Macroeconomic Challenge Themes**

**Policy and governance failures.** Policy and governance failures (see Table 3) were the most significant macroeconomic challenge theme from the data, occurring 10.59% of the time in the study. P1, P2, and P3 agreed that the onerous challenges confronting the industry in developing the HC emanated more from government policies and implementation, and the governance of the THL industry. This finding was consistent

with the argument of Fayos-Solá et al. (2014) about the requirement for a balanced tourism policy and governance to launch astrotourism successfully. The number and quality of labor engaged in a country's THL industry depends on its international tourism, which thrives where policies structured to attract tourists and tourism investors are beneficial and functional (Fayos-Solá et al., 2014; Panahi et al., 2015). Unfavorable government policy and poor THL industry governance would have a negative influence on HCD in the industry.

Table 3

*Frequency of THL HCD macroeconomic and microeconomic challenges themes*

	Challenges	Frequency	Percentage of Subtotal	Percentage of Total
Macroeconomic	Policy and Governance Failures	25	30.86	10.59
	Insecurity	12	14.81	5.08
	Negative Industry Perception	8	9.88	3.39
	Poor Power Infrastructure	8	9.88	3.39
	Microeconomic	Character of Potential Employees	16	19.75
	Lack of Interest in THL as a Career	12	14.81	5.08
	Subtotal	81	100.00	34.32

In answering the sixth interview question, "How can THL leaders make the industry attractive to future employees?" P2 said "the leaders of the country rather than the leaders of the hospitality industry have action to take." The participant pointed out that Nigeria needs a change in the education policy by providing more specialist schools to develop THL industry HC. This view aligns with the literature that THL needs favorable government education policy and implementation to flourish (Fayos-Solá et al.,

2014; Moscardo, 2014; Panahi et al., 2015). Brown, Thomas, and Bosselman (2015), however, submitted that training more specialists might not translate to building the stock of HC for THL. Variables, such as work-family conflict and poor remuneration, do cause hospitality graduates to leave the industry (Brown et al., 2015) as indicated by the employee turnover business outcome on Table 2.

Furthermore, P1, P2, and P3 expressed frustration in the industry governance and government roles in the Nigerian tourism and hospitality industry. This experience was consistent with the submission of Fayos-Solá et al. (2014) that people often misconstrue industry governance for government's roles in many tourism destinations. A good governance system is indispensable for a successful THL industry (Moscardo, 2014). P1 said:

Another challenge we have is government levies and fees. The government would charge fees, from pollution fees knowing that you do not have any other method than to generate your electricity. You will pay pollution fees, you will pay environmental fees, you will renew your impact assessment study every 3 years, you will pay government estate fees, there are many fees introduced by the government. In addition to the statutory fees like your tax, the capital gains tax, your employee tax, your VAT [value added tax]. Ad hoc task forces formed by the government harass life out of the hotel business; we are harassed, badly harassed by the task forces, and that is a big challenge. (P1)

A functional THL policy action must contain programs that address data, sustainability, knowledge or the development of HC, quality, and excellence, promotion, innovation, cooperation and governance (Fayos-Solá et al., 2014). P2 observed that “negative

government policies have resulted in foreign investors not willing to invest in the country.” Add summary to fully conclude paragraph and avoid ending it in a quote.

**Insecurity.** Next to policy and governance failures was insecurity (5.08%). The participants agreed that safety and security require major policy improvement for the THL industry in southern Nigeria to attract international tourism, which could influence the development of HC for the industry (Fayos-Solá et al., 2014; Panahi et al., 2015). Entrepreneurs developed the THL industry, but the level of insecurity in Nigeria discourages foreign investors who could bring new ideas, skills, and innovation to the industry (Moscardo, 2014) resulting in a slow growth business outcome (see Table 4). Submissions by the participants and observations at all the sites visited showed that all the organizations provided their own security operatives, including paid government security forces, installation of their own closed-circuit television (CCTV), and employees on safety and security training. P1 submitted that security increases the running cost (cost escalation business outcome on Table 4), and is contributory to the poor remuneration of the industry employees, which in turn influences the perception of potential employees about the industry (another macroeconomic challenge, see Table 3).

Table 4

*Frequency of THL HCD business outcomes themes*

HCD Business Outcomes	Count	Percentage of Subtotal	Percentage of Total
Employee Productivity	22	29.33	9.32
Corporate Reputation	16	21.33	6.78
Turnover	13	17.33	5.51
Customer Satisfaction	10	13.33	4.24
Cost Escalation	8	10.67	3.39
Slow Growth	6	8.00	2.54
Total	75	100.00	31.78

**Negative industry perception.** The societal perception of an industry influences its attraction to potential employees. Brown et al. (2015) submitted that the positive and negative perception of Generation Y employees of the hospitality industry influenced their decision to leave, stay, or return to the industry. The southern Nigeria experience, as submitted by P2, is in conjunction with Wang and Huang (2014) and Pearlman and Schaffer (2013) that argued that the working condition is a reason for the negative perception of the THL industry among students. P2 noted that the society views the THL as a revenue generating industry rather than a prestigious career. Most employees are not passionate, which made HCD arduous.

**Poor power infrastructure.** Poor electrical power infrastructure contributes to the high cost of running THL businesses in Nigeria. From the submission of one of the participants and observations made at all locations visited, the THL industry in southern Nigeria spends considerably in managing this macroeconomic challenge. Each organization provided the infrastructure essential for the business including diesel-driven power generating units and utility water. P1 said “these move a lot of capital from the industry into generating power and that has taken quite a lot of money off the workforce” and also led to the unfavorable business outcome of cost escalation (see Table 4). This experience was consistent with the observation of Mahachi, Mokgalo, and Pansiri (2015) that powering hospitality firms is capital intensive. If THL leaders could not provide the best HCD opportunities to their employees because of the resources expended on power generations, then that could affect the quality of the personnel HC negatively. P1’s submission also agreed with one of the propositions of HCT that competence acquired by employees through education and training has a quality value the learner realizes

(Cornacchione & Daugherty, 2013; Jepsen & Montgomery, 2012; Luckstead et al., 2014; Sweetland, 1996). THL organizations gain internal benefits from reduced cost of energy used (Chan, Au, Wang, Yao, & Jiang, 2015; Mahachi et al., 2015).

### **Microeconomic Challenge Themes**

**The character of potential employees.** The most significant microeconomic challenge theme was the character of potential employees (6.78%, see Table 3). The statistics corroborated the submission that human resource is the most critical asset in THL (Mulvaney & Hurd, 2015); therefore, the character of the potential employee is cardinal. P2 observed “human resource is meant to discover and encourage potentials, to build and inform them to perform without micromanaging but persons with no qualifications and the requisite experiences are employed making the dread of the society get employed in the hospitality industry.” In the same vein, P1 said “these are people who go into people’s room, and you must be sure of their integrity that they never tamper with things belonging to guests, in which case the hotel is put in a bad light.” This would result in a negative corporate reputation business outcome (see Table 4). This finding also affirms Baum’s (2015) submission that human resource issues are the vanguard in the challenges of global tourism. Persons with bad character or poor social capital could have poor intellectual capital (Teo et al., 2014)

An example of character issues is defiant work behaviors (DFW) (Tuna, Ghazzawi, Yesiltas, Tuna, & Arslan, 2016). DFW are voluntary employee violation of important organizational culture, which pose a threat to the existence of the organization (Tuna et al., 2016). To address the character challenge, P1 said that “getting the right people with the correct mix of skills and with the correct service mentality” is important.

The participant added that in his organization, cameras monitor employees while at work to forestall the likelihood of DFWs. Meanwhile, P2 noted that “a few persons are passionate, they do not see hospitality as a mere means of survival but as branding, they are positive and not negative.” This view agrees with the recommendation of Yang, Wan and Wu (2015) that hoteliers should shape employee attitudes and behavior through internal branding.

**Lack of interest in THL as a career.** The THL industry is not popular as a choice career destination. Researchers in other parts of the world reported that hospitality students were not decisive in the career they wanted to pursue (Nachmias & Walmsley, 2015). Many do not have a clear understanding of the demands of the profession, which results in seeking employment in other areas or leaving the industry (Brown et al., 2015; Nachmias & Walmsley, 2015). Findings from this study agree with these submissions. P2 in answering the first question “What is your experience in the THL industry on HCD?” said “the industry is not seen as a career path rather as an alternative.” P1, a retired geologist with more than 30 years experience in the oil and gas industry, and the CEO of his organization who joined the industry by interest, said “I had an interest in the leisure and catering and hotel industry, as a young geologist I took interest in trying to develop that (the THL) industry.” P2, a lawyer and the HR manager of her organization also said “people do not seek a career in the hospitality industry by choice but by the circumstances of life; there is no passion for the industry. Therefore, we need to convince people.” Based on these views, societal interest in the THL industry, which could drive increased recruitment of high potential HC, is lacking in southern Nigeria. Therefore,

practitioners in the industry need to adopt strategies that encourage peoples' interest in the industry.

Operators of the THL industry need to collaborate with policymakers and hospitality educators to enhance the interest and the likelihood of hospitality students to take up career in the industry (Hertzman, Moreo, & Wiener, 2015). P2 concurred that “the specialized training schools are encouraging, their products are often better.” A key drawback was that the school training does not provide sufficient exposure to the realities of the industry such as long hours and being out of regular social order, which contributes to graduates not joining the industry (Brown et al., 2015). Therefore, exposing hospitality students to the reality of the industry through internship and organizing of hospitality fairs could engender more interest in the industry (Brown et al., 2015; Hertzman et al., 2015; Nachmias & Walmsley, 2015). Operators also need to address other factors stated in the literature that discourage the new graduates from the industry – work-family balance, low compensation, and absence of functional and supportive labor unions (Brown et al., 2015; Hertzman et al., 2015; Joo-Ee, 2016).

The THL industry often falls below the expectations of new graduates or high potential employees. Brown et al. (2015) reported that Generation Y members accord high value to remuneration and promotion while Millennials cherish instant gratification rather than long-term goals (Hertzman et al., 2015). Students hold imprecise career goals and often prefer to join large corporate organizations (Nachmias & Walmsley, 2015). P2 submitted that the motivation of hospitality employees increases when they see the possibility of wealth creation in the industry and avenues to meet their pecuniary interests. In consonance with Hertzman et al. (2015), P3 observed that more Nigerians



would join the THL industry if a benefit such as all-expense paid trips to prestigious places for holiday was included in the remuneration. P1 said:

Irrespective of the strategy employed, the reason is that the salaries or the wages of typical leisure industry personnel are relatively small compared to other competing industries like manufacturing, oil, road construction because those people earn more allowances than those in the hotel industry.

This finding agreed with the literature that hospitality graduates sought career destinations in large traditional organizations (Nachmias & Walmsley, 2015) and supported the HCT that persons with high HC earn more.

### **The Strategy Themes**

**Resourcing practices and use of temporary workers.** Pearlman and Schaffer (2013) argued that recruiting and retaining quality employees is cardinal to corporate business success. P3, answering the question “how can THL leaders make the industry attractive to future employees?” submitted that the lack of a structured remuneration scale such as obtainable in the Nigerian civil service was one demotivating factor to graduates that could have joined the THL industry. To achieve corporate objectives, the THL industry leaders in southern Nigeria look for some peculiar competencies when recruiting employees. Faced with the challenge of not being a popular career destination, operators look for individuals with good character though might possess lesser qualifications. The operators also engaged temporary workers such as students, and products of specialist schools whose highest qualification could be a diploma, and whose prospects in the large and favorite employment destinations (Nachmias & Walmsley, 2015) are narrow.

***Recruitment of persons of good character.*** The candidate's character appeared to be of more importance than qualifications. P1 pointed out that "getting the right people with the correct mix of skills" is important. The participant also added that:

There has to be a level of trust in the workers that you have, and in that case, it is key to recruiting people who are honest, people who will tell the truth, and people who will do the service. (P1)

This strategy aligns with another finding in this study that the most significant microeconomic challenge facing the industry was the character of the potential employee (see Table 3). The strategy also aligns with the qualitative dimension of the HCT framework (Sweetland, 1996), in other words, persons having social and HC would possess intellectual capital. Such persons would have the ability to deliver a pleasant tourism and hospitality experience that would positively influence firm performance (Teo et al., 2014). Mulvaney and Hurd (2015) integrated the views of four other authors and deemed that parks and recreation professionals face challenging and dynamic operating environment than other professionals because their job activities depend on the fluctuating needs and comfort of their clients. Therefore, employees in the THL industry ought to be persons possessing good communication, social, and interpersonal skills (Lee & Tsang, 2013; Mulvaney & Hurd, 2015) to respond appropriately to satisfy the customer (a desirable business outcome, see Table 4).

***Recruitment of temporary workers.*** The THL industry, particularly, faces the challenge of enlisting and retaining high potential and high quality employees. The reasons for the high turnover included the working conditions, compensation, and hospitality students' shallow appreciation of the demand of the industry before

graduation (Brown et al., 2015; Hertzman et al., 2015; Nachmias & Walmsley, 2015). Therefore, operators of the industry recruit labor through different means including engaging temporary service workers, international workers, and illegal foreign workers (Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013).

P1 made a similar submission stating that THL is “an industry that can make use of temporary skills and temporary staffing.” P1 also submitted that the industry engages undergraduate students as nonpermanent staff supervised by a few skilled personnel in consonance with the observation of Joo-Ee (2016) that THL operators could hire more part-time workers and temporary work agencies to manage the increase in wages and the cost of full-time employees’ fringe benefits. THL provides many job opportunities such as seasonal and flexible jobs for persons looking for such (Arionesei, Vranciu, Neamtu, & Moroşan, 2014) without the burden of full benefits placed on the employer.

Recruiting temporary employees affords the THL industry leaders and the temporary employees the opportunities to develop the industry HC and to acquire valuable skills respectively in alignment with the research question and the conceptual framework. Exposing students to the THL life while at school engenders the necessary interest and appreciation that could make the temporary employee or student pursue a career in the industry (Brown et al., 2015).

***Preference for graduates of specialist schools.*** P1, P2, and P3 preferred the products of specialist schools though there are not many of such available. P2 said that the “specialized training schools are encouraging” while P1 mentioned that chefs, as a specialists pool in the industry, are very skilled and tend to rank among the top salary levels. The argument of Teo et al. (2014) that the HC of small- to medium-sized service

organization is the product they sell supports this recruitment strategy. However, Welch, Williams, Darville, Smartt, and McBroom (2015) argued otherwise stating that job self-efficacy between specialists certified parks and recreation professionals and those not certified had no significant difference.

This finding complemented another finding that the lack of interest (see Table 3) is a challenge to the THL industry, and agreed with the earlier finding of Nachmias and Walmsley (2015) that hospitality students could be indecisive in the career they wanted to pursue. Therefore, the students could lack the essential interest. Completing a hospitality-related course of study might not be an indication of requisite interest in the profession (Nachmias & Walmsley, 2015). P2 corroborated this observation and stated that “there is no passion for the industry; therefore we need to convince people.”

**Remuneration, reward and recognition.** In congruence with the submission that only 18% of hospitality employees considered the industry salary satisfactory (Joo-Ee, 2016), the most applied strategy employed by P1, P2, and P3 to develop the HC for the industry was remuneration, reward, and recognition (14.83% occurrence on Table 5). P3 said “HR uses the salary and the service charge, which gives the zeal to bring the mind to work”, also that “employees do their best in hospitality organizations that provide welfare.” P1 noted that for the organization HC to be productive, “the recognition of skills, recognition of team working, recognition of effectiveness in one’s role, recognition of leadership skills are all rewarded.” These reward types underscored the assertion of Joo-Ee (2016) that hospitality employee are more fascinated by allowances more than the basic salary because hospitality operators could adjust fringe benefits to compensate for a

change in salary if mandated to comply with minimum wage. Another comment by P1 agreed with Joo-Ee (2016):

We have in the industry a way of rewarding staff. It is secret; it is not an open thing. Staffs that have done exceedingly well are rewarded by bonuses. We don't make increases in salary personal because of the transient nature of the business, which performance rises and falls with the economy. (P1)

Table 5

*Frequency of THL HCD strategy themes*

Organizational Strategic themes	Count	Percentage of Subtotal	Percentage of Total
Remuneration, Reward and Recognition	35	43.75	14.83
Resourcing Practices and Use of Temporary Workers	23	28.75	9.75
Training	15	18.75	6.36
Technology	4	5.00	1.69
Ethics And Compliance	3	3.75	1.27
Total	80	100	33.90

In contrast to P1, P2 stated that P2's organization runs an open reward system:

Encouraging those that stand-out and rewarding them publicly. Employees that improve themselves are also encouraged, for instance, an employee learned the French language thereby increasing the value of the hotel. Consequently, he got a new position to expose him and to give him more opportunities. (P2)

P2 further added "we recognize employees that maintain decorum; we give a financial incentive for good performance. For instance, there is a financial incentive for having no incidents to encourage the prevention of accidents and incidents." THL establishments offer compensation structure that includes pay and nonpay incentives, free

accommodation, profit sharing and commissions that could place them above national minimum wages (Joo-Ee, 2016). P3 added that financial tips from the organization leaders to the frontline personnel could achieve similar motivational benefit.

**Training.** Training appeared the most popular form of HCD in every industry. Training is a form of education, which is a precondition for creativity and innovation when done appropriately with the right theoretical and practical content (Arionesei et al., 2014). On HCT, training increases the HC and the productivity of employees (Sandulli, Baker, & López-Sánchez, 2014), a desirable business outcome (see Table 4). P1, P2, and P3 agreed on the importance of training as an HCD strategy. P1, P2, and P3 mentioned training types such as on-the-job (OJT), classroom, in-house training by specialists, those delivered by specialized hospitality schools, and advertising agents. P1 mentioned that the first OJT delivered was induction by “the supervisors taking new employees around and introducing them to the system, then a formal training to tell how the whole thing (business) works.”

Consistent with the submission of P1 was the induction of some temporary staffs observed at P2’s organization over three visits. P3’s organization provided a manual titled “hotel business training and development” used for formal training of the employees. The use of training as an HCD strategy by the leaders of the THL industry in southern Nigeria is in accordance with the literature and the HCT (Arionesei et al., 2014; Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013).

The content of THL training program is important to achieve the HCD intent (Arionesei et al., 2014). P1 noted that “in the industry, the major areas of training are housekeeping, safety, security, firefighting, and emergency response” and P3 supported

that training content must be adequate to bring out the best in the employee. The constant change in the THL industry demands that training is regular as an inevitable part of the business that enhances employees' job satisfaction (Arionesei et al., 2014; Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013). In agreement, P2 submitted that his organization conducts yearly training by consultants because of regular changes in the workforce. Consistent with these submissions were the content of the training manual provided by P3's organization, which contained topics such as workplace hazard management, risk management, food handling and hygiene, waste management, health and safety, customer satisfaction and complaints handling, behavior, stakeholder management, and finance.

P1, P2, and P3 supported training by specialists to general training of employees. P2 said that products of specialist training were better than employees that attended generic training in hospitality. P1's specialist training strategy included new employee induction by the supervisors, staff rotation through different departments to build their skills, external training by specialists that advertise the hotel, and specifically, training of new chefs by the experienced ones. This strategy agreed with the submission of Georgiadis and Pitelis (2012) that specialist experience was a strong positive predictor of company profitability. P1 also added that specialists such as security experts also deliver training. Safety training is also done by the supervisors like the one done by the catering staff, and also some training done by the management of the hotel to try to let the staff link the way the different arms of the business work in a seamless fashion'.

**Technology.** Labor productivity does not depend on the adoption or the intensity of technology (Sandulli et al., 2014; Li, 2014). Observations conducted at the three sites showed that the three organizations use information technology at the front desk. There

were no other HCD-related technologies, such as mobile apps, notably in use possibly due to other findings in this study – cost escalation (see Table 4) due the macroeconomic challenge of power infrastructure (see Table 3 **Error! Reference source not found.**) and other reasons. P1 observed that:

Managing the software part that linked the business is also a very major problem because you have to have the maintenance engineer constantly coming. We hardly use most of the software that you just buy off shelf; you have to use those that are sustainable. We often have a problem with software because when power fails, the front desk employees go back to the paper receipt system, which is more prone to fraud.

HCD-related technology penetration into the southern Nigeria THL industry is minimal, consistent with the submission that investment in information communication technology (ICT) does not translate to significant productivity increase in service sectors (Li, 2014).

**Institutionalizing ethics and compliance.** A THL organization needs to establish the right ethical rules to regulate employee behaviors (Lee & Tsang, 2013). P2 noted that institutionalizing ethics and compliance is essential to “discourage miscreants from committing offenses.” P2 also added, “We use the query, which, after the third occurrence of the same offences, we can exercise our legal right to hire and fire. We discourage indiscipline but recognize staffs that maintain decorum.” An observation of the induction conducted for a new intern in P2’s site highlighted the operationalization of the organization’s ethics and compliance standard from the point of entry of a new employee. The induction reiterated ethical requirement of the organization and the expectations from the new intake to comply. In addition to their function as security



surveillance tools, P1 said that his organization also strengthens ethics and compliance by using a camera system to make sure unethical things do not happen and that employees would be aware. Employees in a people-focused industry such as THL need a structured guide on conduct, especially to respond to difficult customer (Lee & Tsang, 2013). P1 observed that THL leaders are not always at the service points to effect ethical compliance, a submission that agreed with Lee and Tsang (2013).

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The participants in the study recognized the place of the country's macroeconomy in providing the right environment, security, and infrastructure, to make the THL industry thrive. Policymakers need to consider the THL industry as strategic to the development of the economy, culture, and security of a country (Panahi et al., 2015). Therefore, the government should manage macroeconomic factors, for instance, policy and changes in government, security and infrastructure issues that could constitute external shocks to the demand for THL services (Panahi et al., 2015). External shocks could influence international tourism negatively with consequent adverse effect on the quality of HC engaged in the THL industry (Fayos-Solá et al., 2014; Panahi et al., 2015). THL leaders need the government to create the economic environment (Bishop and Brand, 2014) for a healthy THL demand system that would elicit investment in the development of their employees (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014). Investment in HC would also meet government's aspiration for job creation and economic growth. The THL industry needs supportive policies (Fayos-Solá et al., 2014) that address the challenges outlined.

P1, P2, and P3 highlighted the peculiar challenges the THL industry in southern Nigeria faces in developing HC. In addition to the policy-related macroeconomic

challenges affecting the tourism demand system, P1, P2, and P3 also pointed out social challenges such as perception, and microeconomic challenges of sourcing skilled, well-behaved, and committed persons for the industry. The THL industry needs passionate local acceptance (Moscardo, 2014) to attract the best local human resource and to enjoy investment in HCD. Increasing international tourism depends on increasing internal tourism (Panahi et al., 2015). Policymakers and the society need to make positive changes about THL, for the leaders to develop the industry sustainably.

In developing the THL HC, P1, P2, and P3 provided three considerations in recruiting employees – good character, employment of temporary workers, and engaging graduates of specialist schools. Recruitment is the point of entry to the industry for most persons, and P1, P2, and P3 recognized the importance of starting HCD from there. HC is the channel through which THL activities conduct positive influence on corporate profitability and economic growth (Deng & Ma, 2014). Qualified employees are an indispensable resource to the organization (Nieves & Segarra-Ciprés, 2015). P1, P2, and P3 also emphasized the imperative of recruiting employees with the right social capital. Educated employees with social capital would possess higher intellectual capital and will be more resourceful, enhancing management innovation and productivity, and providing a competitive advantage in THL organizations (Bishop & Brand 2014; Borggren, 2014; Deng & Ma, 2014; Nieves & Segarra-Ciprés, 2015).

Additionally, giving reward and recognition, giving appropriate training (formal and informal), instituting organizational ethical standard, and adopting affordable technology are essential to enhance the productivity of the THL industry HC (Brown et al., 2015; Chang & Ma, 2015; Li, 2014; Sandulli et al., 2014; Teo et al., 2014). The

themes from P1, P2, and P3's interviews, site observations, and training documents obtained provided strategies for developing the HC for the THL industry. The study findings contributed to the existing literature and applying the strategies could improve the practice of THL in southern Nigeria and transferability of the findings to other regions. Implementing the findings could contribute to developing the THL industry HC and improve corporate business performance. THL operators could (a) recruit persons having requisite social capital, (b) induct their employees into a high ethical standard, (c) provide required training to the personnel to enhance their HC, (d) motivate the employees with reward and recognition, and (e) adopt affordable technologies to develop employees' HC and gain competitive advantage.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Based on a global benchmark, the contribution of the Nigerian THL industry to the national economy is below expectation (WTTC, 2015a). The THL industry is Africa's fourth employer of labor (WTTC, 2015a) and could be indispensable to addressing the 25% unemployment in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country (Adesina, 2013) while contributing to growth in the GDP. The WTTC (2015a) reported that though a large number of potential employees were available to the Nigerian THL industry, prospects with the right HC are rare, and employee turnover was one of the worst globally. This study findings (a) recruiting persons with requisite social capital, (b) inducting employees into a high ethical standard, (c) providing trainings to the personnel, (d) giving reward and recognition, and (e) adopting affordable technologies to develop employees' HC could provide the operators of the industry the strategy to turn the industry and economic indices in the right directions.

HCD has implications for social change at three levels; the individual (supply side), the organization (demand side), and the country (supply and demand sides) (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014). Therefore, if stakeholder in the THL industry could review the findings and implement the strategies outlined, policymakers would enact policies that would improve the Nigerian THL competitiveness indices, which are below subSaharan African averages (WTTC, 2015a). There could be more internationalization of the THL industry, which could increase the demand and supply of high HC employees, thereby reducing the country unemployment, increasing her foreign earnings and GDP, and increasing the earning and social welfare of the employees and their families. Tourists have a positive influence on economic growth and an increase in tourists spending correlated with an increase in GDP (Panahi et al., 2015). The more ethical and engaged persons in the society, the lesser would be the pervasive crimes in southern Nigeria (Ingwe, 2015).

An improvement in the business environment at the macroeconomic level would decrease the challenges escalating the cost of doing business and enhance corporate profitability. THL organizations would be motivated to invest more in HCD to meet the expectation of the growing customers and could demand and attract persons with high HC. Implementing the HCD strategies from this study would make THL employees possess the right human and social capital to meet the demand of internal and international tourism, and could improve the industry remuneration level. International tourism has both macro- and microeconomic influence (Panahi et al., 2015). Investing in HC also reduces turnover and increases productivity (Seong-O & Patterson, 2014). As a result, the employees, their families, and the local community would benefit from the

prosperity, and societal perception of THL as a career destination could become better. A reduction in the cost of doing business and consequent increase in profit could encourage THL organizations involvement in societal beneficial corporate social responsibilities (Mahachi et al., 2015).

### **Recommendations for Action**

The purpose of this multicase study was to explore the HC productivity strategies used by THL business leaders in southern Nigeria that have improved employee productivity. The THL industry depends significantly on services rendered by people and people issues remain its forefront challenge (Baum, 2015). Operators of the THL industry in Nigeria should pay attention to the results because they can derive benefits from the findings on the challenges of the industry and the strategies successful operators applied to sustain corporate profitability while developing their workforce. The industry operators would benefit from the research findings by taking five steps – defining their organization’s recruitment requirement to target high social capital persons, instituting and maintaining sound organizational ethics, providing formal and on-the-job training to their employees, incentivizing the employees with reward and remuneration, and adopting only cost-effective and beneficial technologies.

In addition, I would recommend that THL businesses in other parts of Nigeria, hospitality educators, the Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC), the Federation of Tourism Association of Nigeria (FTAN), and Nigerian Hotel Association (NHA) pay attention to these results and share the findings with current and future operators in the industry. Participants in the study would have a summary of the findings and would be able to access the full doctoral study when published. I will publish the

findings of the study in scholarly journals, and will make presentations of the same at industry conferences.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The purpose of this explorative case study was to determine the strategies that THL leaders used to develop employees' HC. I achieved data saturation after the third interview; P3, a middle-level management THL leader in the south-south region, contributed no significantly different views and no new themes (Cassell & Symon, 2011; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013) when triangulated with P1, a CEO-owner from the eastern region of southern Nigeria (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Yin, 2014). The main study findings were five strategies from the recruitment of employees to training and performance management through reward and recognition. Other findings were the challenges the THL industry faces in HCD and the attendant business outcomes of the challenges and the business strategies. The research, however, has inherent limitations requiring further studies (Kepes et al., 2014).

To enhance the contribution of this study to business practice, researchers should conduct studies with a larger sample size, possibly by changing participants' selection criteria and by including organizations from the other four geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Researchers should also include leaders from other THL subsectors such as restaurants and tour operators. The three participants in this study belonged to the hotel and accommodation subsector, which is the most developed in the subregion. Researchers could derive additional understanding by investigating how the strategies influence business performance indicators such as customer satisfaction, financial performance, and employee turnover through a quantitative research method. A quantitative approach

to this study could also provide insight into the significance of each of the strategies outlined in the findings.

### **Reflections**

My objectives in conducting this case study were to develop qualitative research skills and my competence as a THL practitioner while making a noteworthy contribution in an area of national interest. As a chartered engineer, I started out with an assumption that the THL industry has an off the shelf competence framework such as I have in my technical career. Therefore, to have a focus on the experiences and not on statistics, I selected a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach. I developed and followed an interview protocol to engage with the participants openly and in a structured manner. In addition, I avoided interrupting the participants or making suggestions during the interviews. I took these steps to bracket my bias, views, and prognosticative tendencies as a technical person, rather accepting the participants' views and experience as presented (Bhati et al., 2014; Zachariadis et al., 2013).

Completing the doctoral study was a great learning experience that contrasts but complements my prior skills. Despite the discouraging experience of subtle rejection from some organizations, I learned to navigate the bureaucracy of some others to access the top leadership such as a CEO-owner, a lawyer HR manager, and a middle-level management leader, professionals with commendable knowledge and experiences to contribute qualitatively to my study. The participants were high HC persons fit to provide the information required for the research (Kwon & Rupp, 2013; Moreland, 2013; Reilly et al., 2014). I obtained the study findings from the themes derived from the rich data

provided by these participants (see Appendices D to F for participants' thematic comparison charts).

My interaction with the participants enlightened me about the challenges the Nigerian THL industry faces. Hitherto, I would draw no correlation between the power generating sets, the garrison of military and civilian security men engaged by hospitality organizations, and the employee HCD. I gained the understanding however, when the CEO-owner participant stated that these unavoidable appendages take money from the industry and the employees. Providing these duties normally performed by the government was a significant part of THL organizations' operating expenses. Whereas similar organizations in other parts of the world spend more than 60% of their operating expenses on employees (Mulvaney & Hurd, 2015), their counterparts in southern Nigeria spend about the same on government responsibilities, while still paying taxes. I have now a better appreciation of the variables that kept the ranking of the THL industry of Africa's most populous country and the largest economy, abysmally poor at 131 out of 141 countries globally (WTTC, 2015a).

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

The themes from this exploratory case study signified the strategies THL leaders used to develop HC for the industry. The findings, (a) recruiting persons with requisite social capital, (b) inducting employees into a high ethical standard, (c) training the personnel, (d) giving reward and recognition, and (e) adopting affordable technologies to develop employees' HC, were congruent with global benchmark results (WTTC, 2015a), the extant literature promulgations of HCT (Sandulli et al., 2014), and addressed the research question. The case study provided an understanding of the what and how (Yin,



2014) of HCD in the THL industry in southern Nigeria. In addition, the research findings also included an understanding of the industry challenges and the business outcomes of HCD. This exploratory case study has confirmed and extended the body of knowledge on HCD in the THL industry, the influence on employees, the corporate business performance, and the national economy.

The insights gained from the findings could provide a guide to all stakeholders in the THL industry on how to develop the industry through the HC. Government and policymakers need to address the macroeconomic challenges by making and implementing protourism policies that would increase the demand for THL services and provide the necessary infrastructure, especially security and power to reduce the cost of doing the THL business. Some 78% of tourists would demand other THL services (Anamaria & Maria-Cristina, 2013; Chun-Ming et al., 2014). Therefore, Nigeria policymakers need to make significant changes to aid the high potential THL industry.

Operators in the THL industry could also enhance corporate productivity and contribute more to the national GDP by utilizing the strategy findings, and could collaborate with hospitality educators or the general education system to instill ethics and discipline in future employees. Individuals interested in a THL career could use the finding as a guide to understanding the challenges and opportunities in the industry with respect to their personal development and engaging in a rewarding career.

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## Appendix A: Participant's Informed Consent

I want to invite you to participate in a research on human capital development and productivity in the tourism, hospitality, and leisure (THL) industry in southern Nigeria. I selected you because you meet the criteria that participants in the research should be persons older than 18 years, have a minimum 5 years experience as owner or manager of a THL organization. The organization must have 50 or more employees and a functional human capital development program. This consent form is a requirement of the process to confirm you have sufficient information and that you understand the study before deciding to participate. I, Abimbola Peter Alamu, a doctoral student of Walden University USA, will be conducting the study.

### **Background Information**

The purpose of this study is to explore human capital productivity strategies used by THL business leaders in southern Nigeria that have improved employee productivity. This study includes exploring how human capital development strategies contribute to employee productivity and corporate business performance in the Nigerian THL industry. The findings from this study may provide a framework for leaders of the THL industry on investing in their employees' development to enhance business performance. The Nigerian THL industry may thereby develop as a major contributor to the national economy.

### **Procedures**

If you agree to participate in this study, participating in the research will involve granting a 45 minutes face-to-face interview and providing anonymized company and employee information that support the interview discussions. You will have the

opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and the final report of the study if you participate. The interview questions are

1. Briefly describe your experience in the THL industry with respect to human capital development.
2. What are, and how do your organization human resource management strategies improve employee productivity?
3. How do your organization human capital productivity strategies affect your employees?
4. How do your organization human capital productivity strategies affect employee turnover?
5. How do your organization human capital productivity strategies affect corporate business performance?
6. How can THL leaders make the industry attractive to future employees?
7. What additional question should I ask on how to improve employee productivity and corporate business performance?

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Participation in this study is voluntary. That is, you are not under any obligation to grant the interview or provide any information. There is no consequence for deciding not to participate. Should you decide to participate but not willing to continue during the interview or at any time you so decide; you are free to withdraw, without any implication. You are not obligated to complete the interview or provide any information I request. If you do grant the interview, you can still withdraw from the study if you so desire by contacting the researcher by a week after the interview. You will have the opportunity to

review the transcript of your interview to confirm that I did capture your contributions appropriately.

### **Risks and Benefits of Participation**

The most significant risk associated with this study is ensuring the confidentiality of your information as a participant. To mitigate this risk, you will not provide any personal or organizational identifiable information. I will accept only anonymized documents from you as a participant. I will keep all information – interview audio recordings and all documents in a personal safe lock away from any other person. No participant will know other persons are participating. An important benefit of participating in this study is the opportunity to contribute to the growth of the THL industry in Nigeria. Another benefit is the contribution to the improved understanding of how THL leaders can enhance employees' productivity through human capital development.

### **Compensation and Incentives**

As required for the purpose of integrity, I will provide no compensation or incentive for participants in the study.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

Your information will be confidential. The researcher will obtain only anonymized information from you. Your information will be used only for this research, after that, I will store it in a safe lock only accessible to me, and will later destroy them. There will be no information to identify you or any other participants in the final research outcome.

**Contacts and Questions:**

Direct all questions on the research to me. You can reach me by email to XXXXXX-XXXX @waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can contact Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is XXX-XXX-XXXX. The Walden University's institutional review board (IRB) approval number for this research is 01-21-16-0459237 and it expires by January 20, 2017. Kindly keep a copy of this consent form for your records.

**Statement of Consent**

I have read the information provided above, and I understand the purpose of the study enough to decide to participate. I am agreeing to the terms explained above by replying to this email with the response, "Yes, I consent"; if you do not wish to participate, please decline, by replying the email with the word "No."

## Appendix B: The Interview Protocol

### **Procedure**

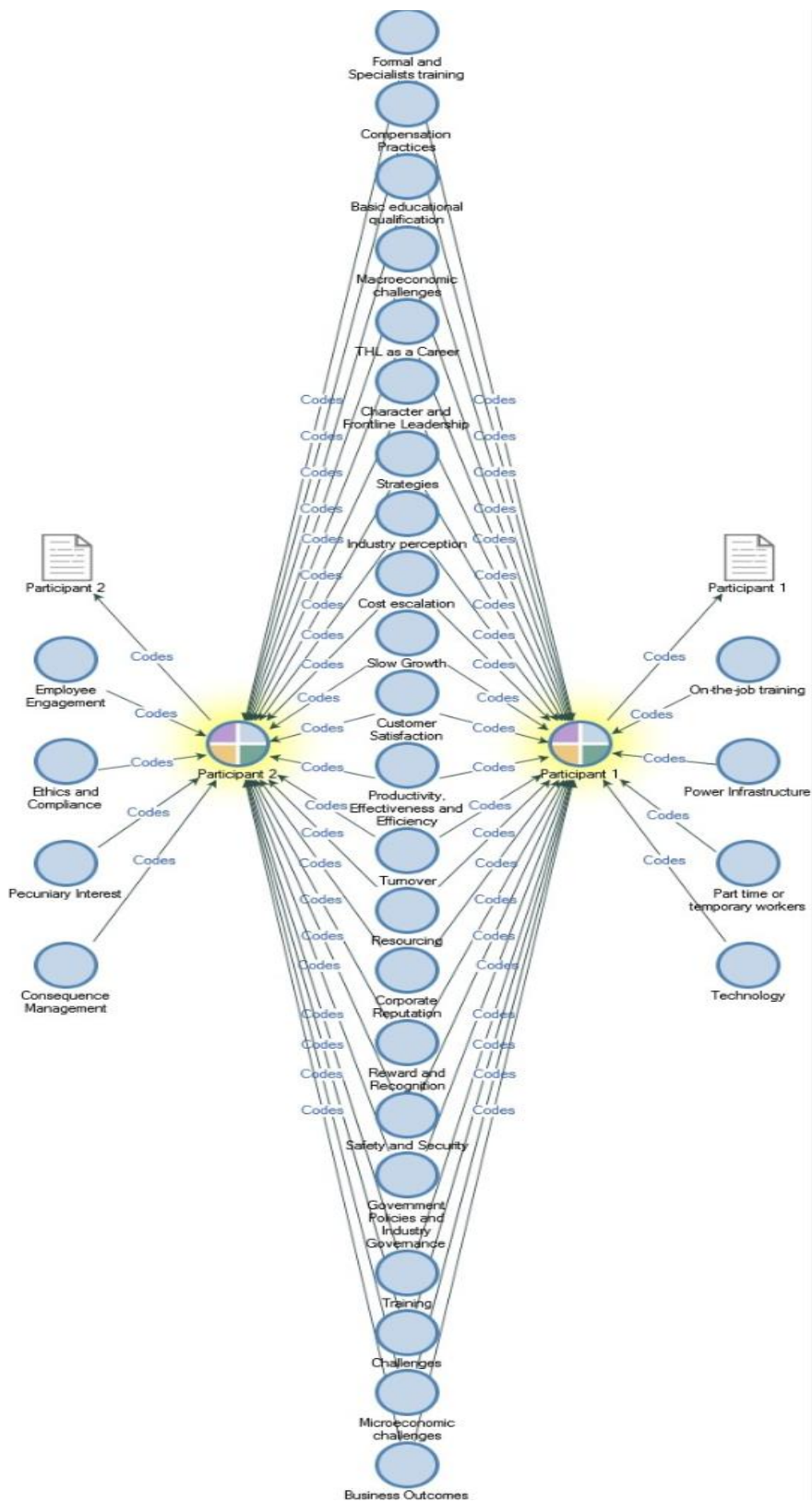
1. Introduce yourself to the participant.
2. Read the background information in the participants' consent form
3. Answer any question the participant has on the research or the consent form earlier provided.
4. Inform the participant and then start the recording device.
5. Introduce the participant with a pseudo-name, say the date and time and record in the interview journal.
6. Conduct the interview starting with the first question. Continue to the last question.
7. Ask any follow-up question(s).
8. End the interview by discussing the participants' right to withdraw from the research. Mention that the participants will have the transcript of the interview to check for correctness.
9. Appreciate the participants for contributing to the research and end the interview.

### Appendix C: The Interview Questions

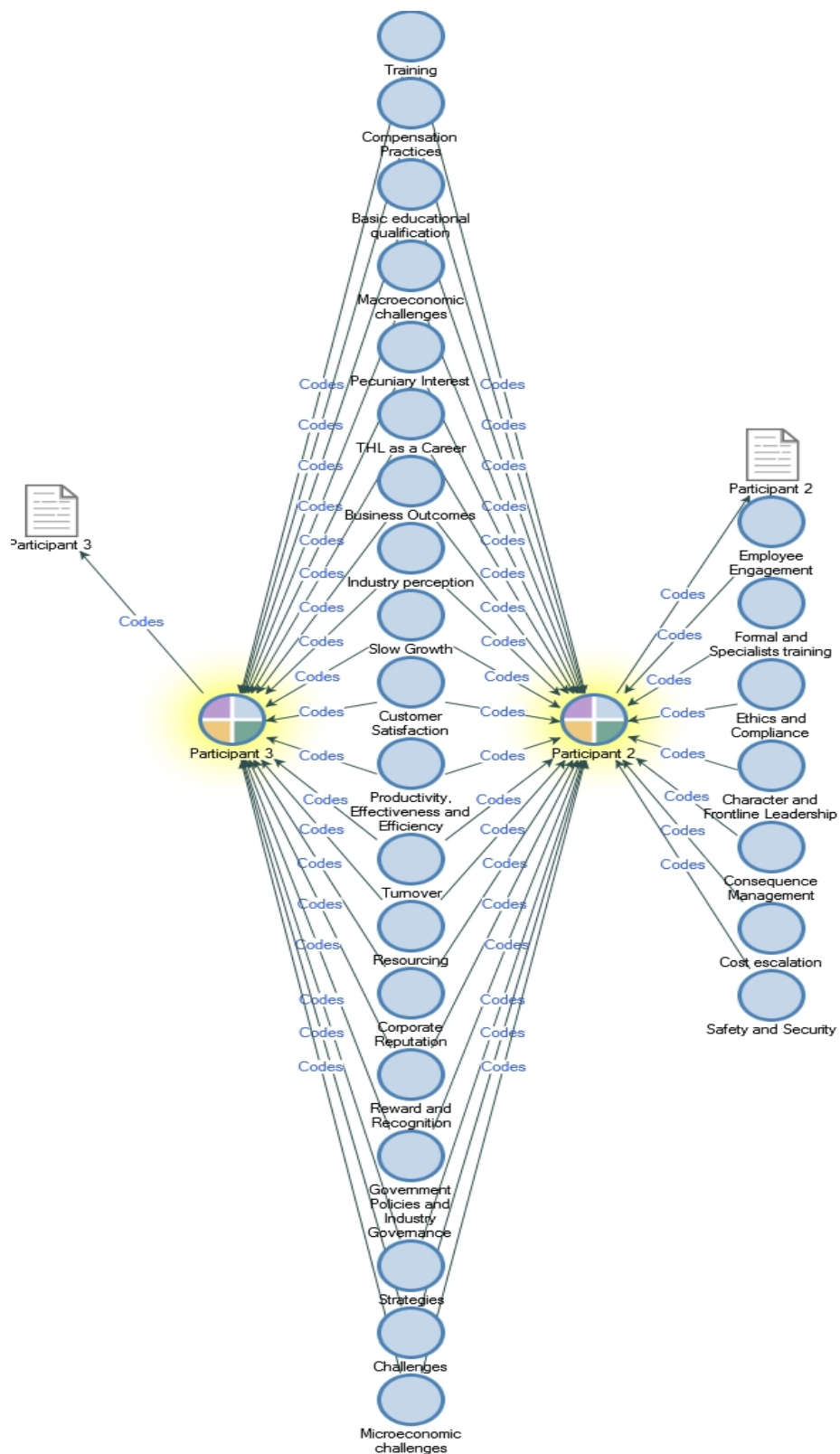
The interview questions are

1. Briefly describe your experience in the THL industry with respect to human capital development.
2. What are, and how do your organization human resource management strategies improve employee productivity?
3. How do your organization human capital productivity strategies affect your employees?
4. How do your organization human capital productivity strategies affect employee turnover?
5. How do your organization human capital productivity strategies affect corporate business performance?
6. How can THL leaders make the industry attractive to future employees?
7. What additional question should I ask on how to improve employee productivity and corporate business performance?

Appendix D: NVivo Comparison Chart of First and Second Participants' Themes



Appendix E: NVivo Comparison Chart of Second and Third Participants' Themes





Appendix F: NVivo Comparison Chart of First and Third Participants' Themes

