

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE PERSONALITY AND HIRING DECISIONS IN THE MALDIVES RESORT SECTOR

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Abstract

This study examines the perceptions of hiring managers in the Maldivian tourism industry regarding the importance of personalities in the recruitment and selection process. Data was collected through a questionnaire distributed to 175 high-ranking managers and directors involved in the hiring decisions. In addition to descriptive statistics, PLS-SEM is used to assess the relationship between personality traits and hiring decisions. Descriptive data analysis indicated some important personality traits considered in the hiring decision, including conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness. The hypothesis tested is supported ($\beta= 0.442$; $p<0.01$) suggesting a positive correlation between personality and hiring decisions in the resort sector of the Maldives. This indicates that in the tourism sector, employers value candidates' personalities during hiring, favoring those with positive traits. Understanding this role of personality in hiring can benefit job seekers globally, including in the Maldives, by highlighting traits correlated with success and career growth

Keywords: Personality Traits, Big Five Personality, Recruitment, Maldives, Resorts Sector,

Introduction

The field of hospitality, is fundamentally centered on the objective of creating an environment where guests experience a sense of warmth and comfort. In this industry, which primarily involves in-person interactions, the quality of service and the overall success of an establishment in meeting customer needs are intricately tied to the competencies and attributes of its employees. As articulated by Richardson and Butler (2010), the presence of enthusiastic, dedicated, and skilled

personnel assumes paramount significance in this sector. Every employee, whether through direct or indirect contributions, wields a discernible influence on the standard of service rendered (Chen, 2019). Consequently, it is entirely rational for recruiters within the service industry to accord highest priority to the evaluation of candidates' personality traits during the selection process (Stalcup, 2002).

Unquestionably, the pivotal role of candidates' personality in the recruitment and selection process assumes prominence especially within industries such as hospitality. In these sectors, critical aspects including service quality, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, competitive advantage, and overall organizational performance are intrinsically linked to the recruitment and effective management of human resources (Potočnik et al., 2021). This longstanding nexus between the field of hospitality and the endeavor to identify the most suitable candidates for available positions has been a focus of scholarly and practical inquiry for over a century (Nikolaou & Oostrom, 2015; Ployhart et al., 2017). These efforts aim to identify individuals possessing both the highest potential for optimal performance and a harmonious alignment with the values and objectives of the hiring organization (Potočnik et al., 2021).

Admittedly, the profound influence of human resources on service quality becomes particularly pronounced in the tourism and hospitality sector, which primarily deliver intangible services. These services, by their very nature, are intangible, produced and consumed concurrently, and often entail direct interactions between customers and service providers. Attributes such as the personality, appearance, attitudes, and behavior of the service provider manifest as tangible components of the service itself. In essence then, employees represent an integral facet of the product, effectively serving as the embodiment of the organization and actively shaping its public image (Bitner et al., 1990; Hartline & Jones, 1996).

The Maldivian resort sector, much like other hospitality providers, is fundamentally rooted in the provision of service, a domain where the critical role of employees cannot be overstated. Given the sector's substantial contribution to employment generation in the country, the Maldivian government has demonstrated a firm commitment to the implementation of comprehensive strategies designed to attract, recruit, and retain a high-caliber workforce within the broader tourism industry, as elucidated in the 5th Tourism Master Plan. These strategies encompass a range of pivotal initiatives, including an effort to inspire and guide the younger generation to pursue careers in the field of tourism. This involves facilitating their comprehension of the industry by integrating fundamental skills into the national curriculum for higher secondary students, a directive outlined by the Ministry of Tourism in 2023. Furthermore, the foundational narrative underpinning the government's strategic initiatives underscores the primacy of recruiting exceptional employees within the tourism industry. This emphasis underscores the significance of specific competencies, encompassing both technical skills and personality attributes, which are deemed indispensable for maintaining a preeminent position in the dynamic market landscape (Ministry of Tourism, 2023).

Expanding on the preceding discourse, despite the tourism sector's well-documented diversity in required competencies and its perceived accessibility to a broad array of candidates (Camilleri,

2011; Verma et al., 2022), a pertinent question arises concerning the marginalization of local job seekers, with a particular focus on the country's youth. In practical terms, the ultimate authority in the process of recruitment and selection resides with the employer, holding a pivotal role in identifying individuals who are most suited to provide the optimum tourism experience. Each position within the sector demands distinct competencies and attributes, with particular significance placed on those pertinent to the service-oriented nature of the resort sector (Derco & Tometzová, 2023). Hence, recognizing the influential role ascribed to personality in the hiring decisions made by these employers assumes great significance.

This scholarly article focuses on the resort sector in the Maldives, a geographically expansive and renowned industry within the country. The Maldivian resort sector is celebrated for its breathtaking natural landscapes and the exceptional hospitality extended to visitors. The Maldives has earned numerous international tourism accolades, including recognition as a premier honeymoon destination, among others. It is the contention of this paper that these accolades are not solely the result of the inherent natural beauty of the Maldives, but are equally attributable to the exceptional service rendered to tourists by the resort's employees.

Accordingly, the primary objective of this academic research is to explore the viewpoint of resort employers regarding the extent to which an employee's personality shapes the hiring choices made by the employers within the resort sector. The central research question underpinning this study is as follows: Is there a significant correlation between personality of the employee and the hiring decisions made in the resort sector of the Maldives?

The paper includes a comprehensive literature on the importance of personality in the hospitality sector and the hirers inclusion of this attribute in the hiring decision, followed by the methodology adopted for the research, and the findings from the tested hypothesis based on the underpinning question. Implications are followed by recommendations for further research.

Literature

The process of selecting individuals possessing the right personality traits and talents holds a central role in HRM practices (Gehrels, 2019b). Although the influence of personality on employee performance is acknowledged in the context of hospitality, there exists a research gap concerning the magnitude of this influence on anticipated job performance and its subsequent impact on hiring decisions (Lan et al., 2021). Furthermore, there is a notable need for insights into HR practices, specifically those related to recruitment and selection criteria, emphasizing attributes beyond just skills, particularly within the workforce of hotels and resorts (Lan et al., 2021)

Personality is a critical perspective for HR managers, helping them understand and leverage employee differences, crucial in the rapidly changing hospitality industry facing increased turnover and the demand for personalized customer experiences (Doan et al., 2021). Research shows that employees with specific personality traits can enhance the service experience (Doan et al., 2021).

Competencies for the Hospitality Industry

According to Kuşluvan et al., (2010) the chief output of tourism and hospitality organizations is services, and due to this, the researchers have investigated the features of services that are most critically driven by human resources in the hospitality sector. The result is a familiar litany: services are intangible; they are produced and consumed simultaneously, usually at the service providers' location; and customers are present or participating in the service, usually with interpersonal interaction between customers and service providers. Owing to these features, services are made tangible in the personality, appearance, attitudes, and behavior of the service provider; thus, employees become part of the product, represent the organization, and help to form the image of the organization (Bitner et al., 1990; Hartline & Jones, 1996).

With that in mind, as emphasized by White (2020), employability in this sector hinges on the possession of essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes requisite for success in the field (Yang, H., 2015). This encompasses the ability to adapt to unforeseen changes in the work environment (Wang, 2013) and the acquisition of skills to effectively manage the spectrum of emotions inherent in the industry's unpredictable nature (Ali et al., 2017). In an environment where a multitude of factors are influenced by human emotions, the adept use of the right soft skills at the appropriate time becomes vital.

In addition to these competencies, there is a need for professionals to exhibit adaptability to change, a quality service attitude, and proficiency in computer and telecommunication skills, which are specific to the hospitality industry (Oktadiana & Chon, 2017). Moreover, essential soft skills, including leadership, preparation for employment, and ethics, are considered significant competencies. Communication, adaptability, flexibility, passion, emotional intelligence, leadership, and team-orientation are consistently identified as the most desirable soft skills for success within the sector (White, 2020). Ethics is deemed one of the most vital work-related competencies in the hospitality industry, alongside self-management and time-management (Min et al., 2016). Furthermore, communication and adaptability stand out as the two most critical soft skills for the industry, with detail orientation, integrity, trustworthiness, and a strong work ethic mentioned as non-negotiable attributes (White, 2020).

In a more focused perspective, Suhairom et al., (2019) assert that chefs must possess a diverse skill set while Smilow and McBride (2010) highlight a deep passion for food, leading to a fulfilling career. Wan et al., (2017) and Kang et al., (2010) emphasize that professional cooking demands a workforce with skill, strong personality, and unwavering determination. Kang et al., (2010) and Peltokangas (2014) stress the significance of personality traits for culinary professionals, positively influencing work performance.

Further, Kwok et al., (2012) emphasized that a considerable portion of the discourse surrounding recruitment has been dedicated to identifying the key qualities essential for a prosperous career in the hospitality industry. Specifically, when considering restaurant managers, Graves (1996) conducted a survey involving human resource executives and recruiters in food and beverage (F&B) operations to ascertain the personality traits associated with successful hospitality managers. Their responses collectively highlighted five key personality traits for successful F&B managers: "energetic," "sociable," "trustworthy," "friendly," and "stable."

While possessing a definitive skill does not guarantee that two individuals with the same skills will deliver identical outcomes, additional personal attributes play a substantial role in determining whether individuals, even with comparable skills, can provide exceptional products or services. This correlation is closely tied to the diverse array of personalities exhibited by individuals. He et al., (2019) emphasizes the relevance of personality traits in understanding job performance and organizational behavior. It is inaccurate to assume that each person adheres strictly to a specific set of personality traits. Depending on the frameworks used to assess personalities, individuals may display a range of personality traits, and such manifestations can be influenced by the context and situation. Nevertheless, each individual undoubtedly possesses certain prominent personality features derived from the frameworks employed.

In the context of the hospitality and tourism industry, understanding employee personality not only enhances the effectiveness of human resource management policies and practices but also ensures the provision of high-quality customer service (Lu & Ahn, 2023; Barrick and Mount 1991). To maintain customer satisfaction and business success, hospitality organizations heavily rely on interpersonal interactions among employees, their peers, and clientele (Kim et al., 2019). While the debate surrounding individual differences and organizational interventions persists, numerous studies have emphasized the significant implications of employee personality in the workplace (Bellou et al., 2018; Grobelna 2019).

Personality traits and their importance in hospitality jobs

According to Doan et al., (2021) employee personality has been found to be a self-directing factor at the organizational level. It is seen to influence organizational interventions such as hiring decisions, to enhance employee positive behaviors and the service experiences of customers (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000) because employees with a particular personality trait could be the most suitable people to perform a job or service (Major et al., 2006). Studies on hospitality employees have found the relationship between specific personalities and job requirements that provided the best fit (Presenza et al., 2019; Tews et al., 2010).

Further, Doan et al. (2021) noted a growing body of research on hospitality employee personality and its implications. Among the significant consequences observed for employee personality traits in the hospitality context are job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior. It is essential to recognize the role of employee personality in human resource management, including recruitment, selection, and performance management, given its impact on employees' capacity and competency (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Understanding how employee personality influences workplace outcomes is particularly relevant in the context of the fast-growing and diverse hospitality industry, where customers have varying backgrounds and demands. While research emphasizes employee personality and its implication, hotel recruiters find individual's personality and attitude rather than the academic qualifications obtained lead to better employee performance (Chen., 2019).

Moreover, employee personality plays a profound role in shaping employee attitudes towards their jobs and organizations (Leung & Law, 2010). Different dimensions of the Big Five Factor (BFF)

yield distinct attitudinal outcomes (Spitzmuller et al., 2015). While job satisfaction, a key attitudinal consequence, is influenced by the alignment between an employee's personality and their job environment (Kristof, 1996), organizational commitment, another attitudinal consequence, leads to increased employee engagement and performance. Personality traits are also significant predictors of emotional exhaustion, which is crucial in understanding employee burnout and turnover intention (Doan et al., 2021). All these attitudinal outcomes should be incorporated when making the decision to hire, as costs related to hiring can be significant when turnover is high.

Furthermore, employee personality also yields diverse behavioral consequences in the workplace, influenced by the fit between personality and work conditions and also the values and goals of an organization (Kristof-Brown et al., 2023). Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), representing discretionary actions aimed at enhancing organizational performance, is positively impacted by employee personality. In the hospitality industry, OCB contributes to high-quality service and customer satisfaction, which is a vital element in the resort sector. Job performance, another behavioral consequence, is crucial for employees in providing customer service. Emotional labor, the third behavioral consequence, involves the management of emotional expressions during interactions with customers and employee personality affects how employees handle emotional labor, which is vital in delivering positive customer experiences (Zhu et al., 2021).

In addition, White (2020) emphasizes the significance of interpersonal abilities, also termed as soft skills, which are often referred to as one's emotional intelligence quotient (EQ). These skills encompass communication, language proficiency, and friendliness, all of which play a pivotal role in establishing and nurturing relationships with others, which employees build within the resorts as well as between them and the customer. Emotional intelligence is considered as a fundamental component of soft skills, which involves the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions to assist in thinking, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions (Dong et al., 2022). (Dean, 2019) further adds to the broader category of soft skills, emotional skills, including empathy. Emotional intelligence is consistently featured on lists of desirable employability skills (Bhagra & Sharma, 2018) because Higher emotional intelligence enables individuals to adeptly manage and regulate their own emotions, and hence influences their interpersonal interactions, effectively controlling exchanges and encounters between guests and employees. In fact, some argue that emotional intelligence is twice as significant as technical and analytical skills, and it complements one's IQ (Charoensap-Kelly et al., 2015).

The traits in the big five personality model (OCEAN) is incorporated to the above discussion. Openness to experience pertains to an individual's inclination to be curious and actively seek novel experiences. Those with high openness to experience often exhibit originality and creativity in their actions (Fernandez et al. 2023). Conscientiousness, on the other hand, denotes an inclination toward organization and responsibility and conscientious individuals are characterized by strong time management skills and attention to detail (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Notably,

Conscientiousness demonstrates a robust and favorable relationship with job performance across various domains (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Extraversion, as a personality dimension, is associated with being outwardly oriented, actively engaged, and sociable and they tend to exhibit assertiveness and a preference for stimulating environments (Fernandez et al., 2023). While agreeableness centers around altruism and a genuine concern for the well-being of others those high in agreeableness are often compassionate and cooperative (Fernandez et al., 2023). Finally, Neuroticism relates to emotional instability, contributing to a heightened susceptibility to negative emotions (Fernandez et al., 2023). The study conducted by Fernandez et al., (2023) revealed that there exists a correlation between personality traits and the demands of hospitality management roles. The findings suggest that individuals exhibiting extraverted and conscientious traits, are more likely to excel in positions that align with the requirements of the hospitality industry. Consequently, recruiters are recommended to prioritize candidates with this specific personality profile for roles in the hospitality sector. This recommendation holds particular relevance as recruiters in the hospitality industry have shown a tendency to utilize personality assessments less frequently than their counterparts in other industries (Paraskevas, 2000).

Moreover, Emenheiser et al., (1998) sought to delineate the characteristics of effective restaurant managers by gathering insights from corporate recruiters. Their aim was to create profiles that would guide the identification and selection of new managerial recruits. Their findings underscored that a combination of skill sets, including management skills, a "model" attitude, which denotes the ability to serve as a role model for emulation, marketing skills, organizational prowess, leadership acumen, interpersonal adeptness, and the appropriate personality, were the top seven preferred attributes for restaurant managers.

According to Klotz et al., (2013), one facet of the agreeableness personality trait is the propensity to trust others. This attribute is associated with behaviors that enhance the perception of similarity between recruiters and applicants (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). Moreover, Behling (1998) posits that agreeableness is a pivotal trait for job applicants to possess. The trusting nature of individuals with high agreeableness fosters strong relationships with various stakeholders inside and outside the hiring organization. Conversely, individuals with lower tendencies to trust are particularly sensitive to changes in their perception of the trustworthiness of hiring organizations. Moreover, (Tsai et al., 2024) aptly points out that personality traits have a direct impact on one's perception of self-efficacy, which significantly contributes to individual confidence and further points out that this concept of self-efficacy is intrinsically linked to factors such as self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and locus of control. Notably, Meagher (2017) identified selection criteria by recruiters and hiring managers, including proficiency in people interactions, prior hotel and hospitality experience, and personality. Recruiters are inclined to believe that most other skills can be cultivated through training; thus, they prioritize candidates with the right personality and communication skills.

The subsequent section of this literature review will elucidate some of the most commonly employed personality frameworks within the hospitality sector, as delineated by scholarly research.

Personality frameworks used in hospitality industry

Personality, encompassing a blend of non-physical and non-intellectual characteristics that set individuals apart (Adler 1996), plays a role in shaping decision-making outcomes through its interaction with information framing. An individual's personality type interacts with a range of personal attributes, including pre-existing risk tolerance (Filbeck et al., 2005), responses to risk, individual-level attitudes, self-corrective behaviors, cognitions, and emotions (Endler & Magnusson 1976; Kuhn & Powers, 1975). Additionally, decisions are shaped by the interplay of personality with situational factors and framing effects (Lord & Levy 1994; Hermann et al., 2001). The progression of personality literature aligns with the adoption of psychometric tools to explore its influence on experiential and rational information processing modes (Filippi 2019). The Big Five Factors of Personality (BFF) have particularly gained prominence as a theoretical framework. (Leung and Law 2010).

As highlighted by Doan et al., (2021), personality models have undergone significant development since McDougall (1932) first identified it as comprising five distinct traits, including intellect, character, temperament, disposition, and temper. Notably, the Big Five Factor (BFF) model, also referred to as the Five Factor Model (FFM) and the OCEAN model, has become a fundamental theoretical framework through which organizational researchers examine the implications of personality (Leung et al., 2011). According to this model, an individual's personality functions as a dynamic mental structure and process, influencing their emotions and behaviors in relation to their environment. Fernandez et al., (2023) have underscored the Five-Factor Model (FFM), as the prevailing framework for characterizing personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992). This model introduces the conceptualization of personality through five distinct factors: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (OCEAN), each representing fundamental drivers of individual behaviors and cognitive processes (Holman & Hughes, 2021).

As discussed above the Five-Factor Model (FFM) serves as the overarching framework for categorizing the range of personality traits studied within the behavioral sciences. Prior meta-analyses confirm the associations between FFM traits and various work-related factors (Barrick & Mount 1991; Berry et al., 2007; Chiaburu et al., 2011; Dudley et al., 2006; Hurtz & Donovan 2000; Judge et al., 2013). Notably, conscientiousness emerges as the most robust predictor of job performance across various professions among FFM traits. In combination, these meta-analyses underscore the critical role of personality in elucidating workplace behavior and outcomes.

Numerous studies have highlighted the predictive capacity of the Five-Factor Model in anticipating significant outcomes within organizations, including job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2002), and leadership (Judge, Heller, et al., 2002), which are significant attitudinal qualities to consider when hiring.

Personality and performance and hiring

It is widely acknowledged in previous studies that employee personality plays a pivotal role in achieving organizational objectives and enhancing overall performance (Lu & Ahn, 2023). Extensive research has been conducted to utilize personality as a predictive tool for employee performance (Doan et al., 2021). Moreover, Presenza et al. (2019) emphasize that the service industries such as the hospitality industry relies heavily on employees with favorable personalities to provide customers with high-quality service experiences. Since customers have diverse needs, employees with specific personality traits may be better suited for certain roles or services (Major et al., 2006). Meta-analyses of personality research have consistently revealed that employees whose personalities align well with their workplace exhibit superior job performance compared to those with a mismatched personality-occupation fit (Doan et al., 2021). As such, an employee's personality can be considered a self-directed factor, and distinct personality traits determine an employee's suitability for a specific work environment (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000).

Social psychologists have found that individuals characterized by agreeableness tend to exhibit cooperative, kind-hearted, straightforward, and trustworthy traits (Mahlamäki et al., 2019) making agreeableness a critical factor in social interaction; these interactions being crucial for work performance. Consequently, individuals possessing agreeable traits are more likely to form interpersonal relationships and integrate into groups (Doan et al., 2021). Notably, agreeableness serves as an essential social attitude and stands as the best predictor of job performance (Yang & Hwang, 2014). Highly agreeable employees tend to be calmer and more effective in achieving their work objectives, as they are more likely to follow instructions and suggestions (Boyce & Wood, 2011).

Extroverted individuals are generally described as active, affectionate, fun-loving, and talkative (Mahlamäki et al., 2019). They exhibit optimism, a strong focus on the future, lower susceptibility to distraction, and diminished influence by competitive environments, factors contributing to their excellent task performance (Zweig & Webster, 2004). Furthermore, extroverted employees tend to be ambitious, eager to experiment, and open to implementing new ideas. However, some studies have suggested a negative correlation between extroversion and avoidance tendencies, indicating that extroverted individuals are less likely to be performance-oriented (Zweig & Webster, 2004). Nevertheless, the relationship between extroversion and performance orientation may depend on context-specific factors (Pickett et al., 2019) suggesting a nuanced association.

Openness, as a personality trait, signifies a willingness to embrace new experiences and ideas and is often linked with imagination, sensitivity, intelligence, and curiosity (Barrick et al., 2012). Individuals with high levels of openness actively seek diversity and intellectual stimulation, excel in mastering new knowledge (Blickle et al., 2012), and demonstrate a heightened interest in learning (D'Zurilla et al., 2011). Moreover, individuals pursuing performance-oriented goals benefit from supportive behavior, cognitive engagement, and achievement (Jha & Bhattacharyya, 2013), underlining a positive relationship between openness and performance orientation.

Conscientiousness is characterized by traits such as strict discipline, strong organizational skills, responsibility, and thoughtfulness (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Conscientious individuals are often diligent, optimistic, and committed to completing challenging tasks (Barrick et al., 2012). Their

inclination to actively pursue demanding assignments indicates a connection to learning-oriented personal goals (Gamage et al., 2021). Meta-analyses of goal orientation literature confirm that conscientiousness correlates with performance-oriented individuals, who prioritize achievement and strive to meet standardized performance standards (Doan et al., 2021). As a result, conscientiousness aligns well with a performance orientation. Potočnik et al. (2021) delve into the significance of conscientiousness in predicting job performance, highlighting that this trait strongly predicts performance in highly routinized jobs. However, its correlations tend to be weaker in roles that demand higher levels of cognitive ability (Shaffer & Postlethwaite, 2013).

Furthermore, in the context of the hospitality and tourism industry, Doan (2021) the presence of neuroticism among employees can raise concerns. Neurotic individuals tend to experience high emotional exhaustion and exhibit lower job performance, which could be attributed to the emotionally demanding nature of customer interactions in this industry (Sosnowska et al., 2019). It is suggested that when hiring employees with neurotic tendencies, they should be strategically placed in roles with reduced customer interaction to mitigate their emotional stress. Moreover, human resource practitioners and managers should implement strategies to assist neurotic employees in coping with their emotions before they adversely affect their performance.

Conversely, Doan's (2021) findings underscore the significance of traits such as conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness when selecting employees. These traits are positively associated with organization-preferred outcomes. While personality traits typically do not serve as the sole criteria for hiring decisions, they can offer valuable reference information in the selection and hiring process.

Dutta et al., 2023 indicated that factors such as humility, interpersonal understanding, self-confidence, and flexibility play a crucial role in fostering positive interactions with stakeholders and are strong predictors of performance in the highly competitive and customer-centric hospitality and tourism industry. This is particularly relevant given the current context of rapid employee recruitment and talent shortages (Ladkin & Buhalis, 2016; Kichuk et al., 2019), which necessitates substantial organizational investments in recruiting and training. However, these investments can often go unrealized with the consequences of hiring the wrong individual being not only expensive but also potentially disruptive for organizations (Breugh, 2014). In a high-turnover environment such as the hospitality industry (Doan et al., 2021; Cho & Johanson, 2008), new hires are crucial in meeting organizational expectations and delivering on-the-job performance.

Emotional stability plays a substantial role in job performance across most professions (Doan et al., 2021). High emotional stability scores are associated with traits such as calmness, strength, confidence, and emotional resilience, motivating individuals to succeed (Arora & Rangnekar, 2015). Employees with emotional stability are better equipped to control their temper and handle pressure effectively, ultimately contributing to their positive learning orientation (Kundi et al., 2021). Emotional stability encourages an optimistic outlook, fostering inspiration when faced with challenges (Diener et al., 2020). It also facilitates the acceptance of criticism and suggestions, enabling individuals to consistently complete tasks efficiently (M. Barrick et al., 2012). Given its various attributes, emotional stability is typically observed in learning-oriented individuals.

Moreover, Cai et al., (2021) emphasize the unique challenges faced by employees in the hospitality sector, where emotional demands and stress are prevalent due to the constant need to manage one's true feelings and emotional expressions, especially when dealing with difficult and moody customers. Previous research has demonstrated that emotionally intelligent hospitality workers can effectively utilize their emotional intelligence to comprehend customers' emotions, engage with them, empathize, maintain positive emotions, and recover swiftly from mood-dampening events (Zhu et al., 2021). Their behavior reflects their reliability, sociability, and friendliness, aligning with socially effective interactions (van der Linden et al., 2017). Moreover, research has indicated that the impact of self-report emotional intelligence (EI) is heightened when situations require a greater degree of emotional labor (Cai et al., 2016). Consequently, the performance implications of EI become particularly relevant in hospitality settings with high emotional labor demands (Viglia & Rodrigo, 2020 & Cai et al., 2021).

Furthermore, Kwok et al. (2011) bring to attention empirical evidence indicating that students can employ influential tactics during interviews to shape the impression formed by interviewers and, consequently, influence recruiters' hiring decisions. These tactics span various dimensions, including knowledge, skills, talents, personality traits, values, and social skills (Barrick & Parks-Leduc, 2019). This emphasizes the strategic role that candidates play in shaping their professional image during the interview process.

On this premise, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive relationship between candidates' personality and hiring decisions

Methodology

Data collection for this study followed a quantitative research approach, utilizing the survey method. A questionnaire designed for this study was employed as the primary data collection instrument. The construction of the questionnaire items was based on variables identified in the existing literature, with input from industry experts, and refined through feedback from academic experts, pre-tests, and pilot testing.

In investigating the hiring decisions made by respondents in the resort sector, this study adopted an individual-level approach. Over the course of January to December 2021, the questionnaire survey was distributed to selected resorts, and a total of 175 complete responses came back. It is noteworthy that all responses were comprehensive, without any missing data, as the survey implemented a Google form that required respondents to answer all questions.

Recognizing the potential of common method bias to inflate associations between the study's variables (Podsakoff et al., 2024) this research incorporated various procedural and statistical measures, consistent with the recommendations of Kalkbrenner (2021). Firstly, efforts were made during the instrument development stages to refine scale items, to ensure clarity, as ambiguous items may lead individuals to construct their own interpretations, potentially resulting in comprehension difficulties (Kalkbrenner, 2021). Additionally, statistical techniques were applied, including the utilization of Harman's single-factor test with SPSS, which confirmed that the

cumulative squared percentage of variance was less than 50%. This outcome indicated the absence of common method bias in the collected data.

Findings and discussions

The data collected in this study were subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26. SPSS serves as a robust platform for statistical data generation and facilitates the execution of quantitative analyses, as outlined by Ozgur et al., (2015), Rahman and Muktadir (2021). Descriptive statistics within SPSS were employed to succinctly summarize the data, offering valuable insights into the fundamental characteristics and acumen of the study's respondents. While descriptive statistics alone do not enable the formulation of definitive conclusions, they play a pivotal role in guiding researchers towards the subsequent application of advanced statistical methods suitable for drawing meaningful inferences from the dataset (Dong, 2023).

The study also employed Partial Least Squares (PLS) modeling with the SmartPLS 4.0.9.6 version as the statistical tool. PLS modeling is often used for exploratory work aimed at developing hypotheses, especially when there is limited prior understanding of how variables are interconnected. In this study, the use of a new measurement instrument with the testing of hypotheses related to hiring decisions, categorizes it as primarily exploratory.

Descriptive statistics were employed to assess the extent of consensus regarding the various personalities that respondents conferred that they tend to choose when hiring. A measurement scale utilizing mean scores was adopted, with five distinct levels: 1 – 1.80 indicating "Strongly Disagree," 1.81 – 2.60 representing "Disagree," 2.61 – 3.40 signifying "Neither Agree nor Disagree" (Neutral), 3.41 – 4.20 denoting "Agree," and 4.21 – 5.00 connoting "Strongly Agree." This approach was utilized to quantify the constructs and assess the levels of agreement among the respondents (Pimentel, 2010).

Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics for a set of 7 items related to skills and knowledge. These items were evaluated using a numerical rating scale ranging from 1 to 5 to gauge employers' perceptions regarding the statements. The analysis of the degree of agreement on these items was conducted by examining the mean and standard deviation for each individual item.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Personality traits considered in hiring

During the hiring process I tend to choose....	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level	OCEAN
candidates who seem to be good natured and cooperative	3.98	0.874	Agree	Agreeableness
candidates who seem courteous and charismatic	3.9	0.908	Agree	Extraversion
candidates who seem artistically sensitive	3.12	0.954	Neutral	<i>Unrecognizable for a trait</i>

candidates who seem versatile and adjustable	4.07	0.792	Agree	Openness
candidates who seem honest and transparent	4.42	0.706	Strongly Agree	Openness
candidates who seem to value honesty	4.41	0.736	Strongly Agree	Openness
candidates who tend to be achievement oriented	4.07	0.844	Agree	Conscientiousness
candidates who have respect for time	4.37	0.697	Strongly Agree	Conscientiousness
candidates who are self-disciplined and organized	4.5	0.651	Strongly Agree	Conscientiousness

Upon examining the data presented in Table 1, the specific personality traits that hold significance in employers' selection of candidates becomes apparent. Based on the mean scores, it is evident that employers highly prioritize candidates who exhibit attributes of honesty, transparency, a strong sense of honesty, respect for punctuality, self-discipline, and organizational skills, as indicated by the "strongly agree" ratings.

Furthermore, candidates who exhibit qualities such as being good-natured, cooperative, courteous, charismatic, adaptable, and achievement-oriented received "agree" ratings, underscoring their desirability in the eyes of employers. Notably, the data reveals that only one personality trait received a "neutral" rating, indicating a less clear consensus among employers on its significance. Direct link to OCEAN or the Big Five Personality Traits shows that items aligning to agreeableness and extraversion received agree ratings, indicating that those traits were considered important in the hiring decision. However, 2 of the items out of 3 aligning with conscientiousness ranked strongly agree indicating this trait is considered very important for the resort sector. Similarly, 2 out of the 3 items on Openness was rated as strongly agree indicating its significance in the sector. The item which ranked on neutral was on emotional intelligence, and while a neutral rating does not indicate a definitive level of agreement to the statement, it demands additional scrutiny.

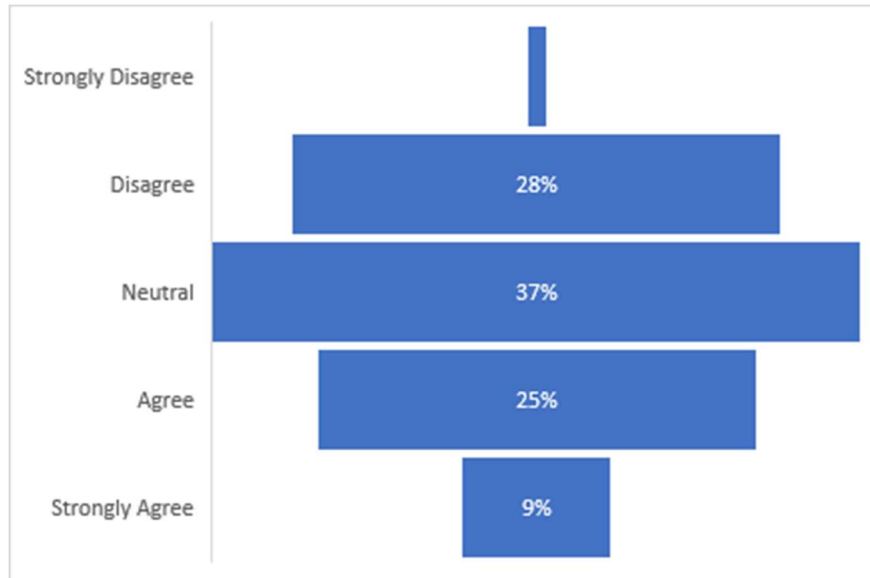


Figure 1: Level of agreement to statement “During the hiring process employers choose candidates who seem artistically sensitive”

As delineated by Figure 1, 63% of respondents manifested a preference for either agreement or disagreement. Within this percentage, a greater inclination toward agreement was observed, with 34% affirming and 29% dissenting. Upon excluding the neutral responses from the analysis, it is discerned that, while there is limited substantiation suggesting the perceived importance of emotional intelligence, a comparative examination between respondents favoring agreement and disagreement reveals a 5-percentage point superiority for the former.

PLS Model - Measurement Model

The approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), involving the 2-step process was employed to evaluate the developed model. First, the measurement model was tested to assess the validity and reliability of the data, in accordance with the guidelines provided by Hair et al., (2019) and Ali et al., (2018). Subsequently, the structural model was tested to assess the hypotheses that had been formulated.

In the assessment of the measurement model, several criteria were examined. First, the loadings of the items were evaluated, with the expectation that they should be greater than or equal to 0.7. One item was removed which had a lower than 0.7 factor loading, and one other item was removed due to collinearity issues, and the final items used for the model, as is the case depicted in; Table 2.

Table 2: Factor loadings

	HD	PT
EB1_ACC		0.715
EB2_DPL		0.721
EB4_FLX		0.724
EB6_LYL		0.831

EB7_MOT		0.764
EB8_PUN		0.787
EB9_RSP		0.825
HD6_SPA3	0.723	
HD7_SPA4	0.875	
HD8_SPA5	0.855	

Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) were assessed, with the criteria that AVE should be greater than or equal to 0.5, and CR should be greater than or equal to 0.7. As presented in Table 2, all AVE values exceeded 0.5, and all CR values exceeded 0.7.

Table 3: Internal Consistency, for the PLS model of the study.

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Personality	0.885	0.895	0.909	0.590
Hiring Decision	0.756	0.783	0.860	0.673

In the second step, discriminant validity was evaluated using the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) criterion, which according to Roemer et al., (2021) was an improved method to assess discriminant validity. According to this criterion, the HTMT values should be less than or equal to 0.90 in the more lenient criterion and less than or equal to 0.85 in the stricter criterion. As indicated in Table 4, the HTMT value was below the stricter criterion of 0.85, suggesting that respondents perceived the constructs as distinct. Therefore, both of these validity tests collectively demonstrate that the measurement items are both valid and reliable.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
PT <-> HD	0.524

Structural Model

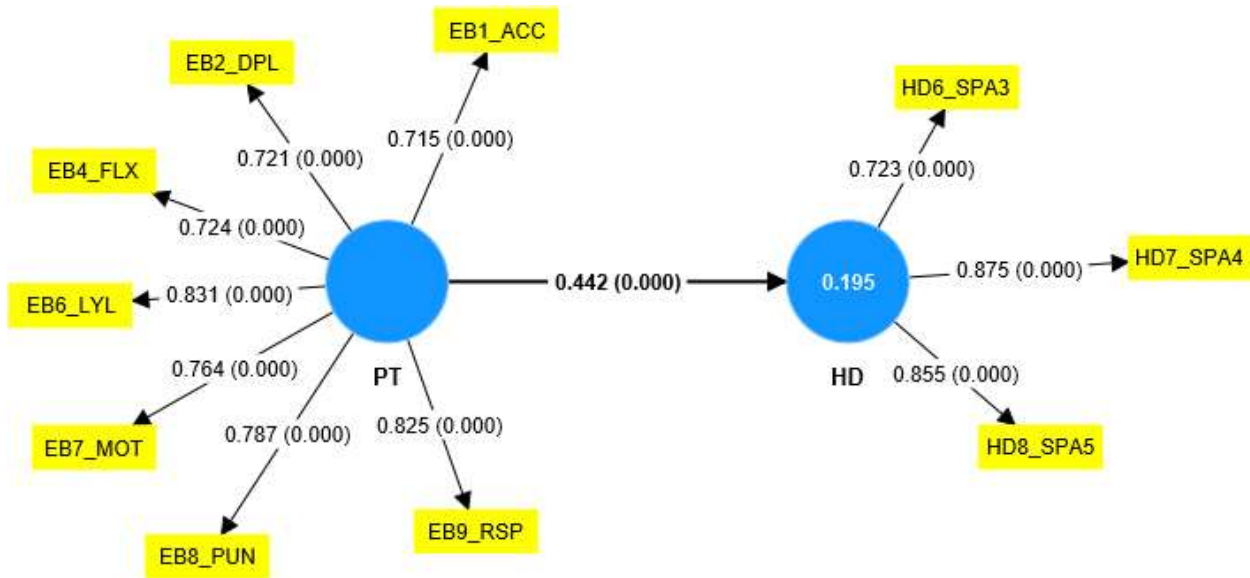


Figure 2: The PLS Model

Once the measurement model was successfully assessed, the results of the PLS-SEM were assessed, using the standard evaluation criteria. According to Hair et al., (2019), these criteria include the coefficient of determination (R^2), the statistical significance and relevance of path coefficients, and a check for collinearity issues. In the structural model assessment, multiple regression equations were estimated to determine the coefficients that describe the relationships between the constructs. It is crucial to examine collinearity to ensure it does not distort the regression results. Collinearity issues are more likely when Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values exceed 5 (HairJr et al., 2021). In this study, all indicators had VIF values below the threshold of 5, indicating no significant collinearity concerns.

Table 4: VIF Values to assess collinearity issues

Item	VIF	Item	VIF
EB1_ACC	2.150	HD6_SPA3	1.329
EB2_DPL	2.256	HD7_SPA4	1.758
EB4_FLX	1.901	HD8_SPA5	1.747
EB6_LYL	2.457		
EB7_MOT	1.784		
EB8_PUN	2.396		
EB9_RSP	2.653		

With collinearity ruled out as an issue, the R^2 value for the endogenous construct was investigated. R^2 quantifies the variance explained by each of the endogenous constructs and ranges from 0 to 1. Higher R^2 values represent greater explanatory power. As described by Hair et al., (2011), R^2 values can be considered significant, moderate, or weak at 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25, respectively. In this study, the R^2 value for the construct "hiring decision" was weak, with an R^2 of 0.191, indicating

that 19.1% of the variance in hiring decision is explained by the construct personality. The robustness of a model is tested based on the SRMR value, with a value below 0.09. The model tested in this paper is acceptable, based on the SRMR value being in the acceptable threshold. To test the significance of the path coefficients obtained through the consistent PLS Algorithm data, bootstrapping was conducted using 5000 iterations, as recommended by (Streukens & Leroi-Werelds, 2016). The results of the bootstrapping-derived path coefficients between the exogenous and endogenous variables are displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: Direct relationship between the variables

Hypothesis	Path	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Result
H1	PT - > HD	0.442	0.451	0.108	4.082	0.000	Supported

As shown by the above table 5, Hypothesis tested is supported as it generated a p value <0.001. The hypothesis of the study suggested a positive correlation between personality and the hiring decision in the resort sector of the Maldives. It shows that in the Maldivian resort sector, personality has a highly significant positive relationship with hiring decisions ($\beta = 0.442$; $p < 0.01$). The personality's T-value for hiring decision was 4.082, indicating a strong correlation significantly higher than the 1.65 significant level. Additionally, the positive Beta value demonstrates a positive relationship between personality and hiring decisions, suggesting that the employers making the hiring decisions in the resorts sector do consider the candidates personality in the hiring process, and candidates who display positive personalities has a better chance of being hired.

While the above model signifies that employer in the sector considers personality as an influencing factor for hiring decision, the descriptive data shows which personality traits are considered more than the others.

The findings were aligned with the findings of White (2020) where the soft skills that were mentioned by recruiters as important to demonstrate during the hiring process included adaptability and flexibility (White, 2020). As recruiters for a service industry, the participants, predictably, felt that personality was an important consideration (Stalcup, 2002). Tourism and hospitality organizations should benefit from more selective staffing to ensure essential personality traits and the ability to provide emotional labor, emotional intelligence, and aesthetic labor. Some people, by natural disposition, seem to be more comfortable and happier in jobs that demand constant interpersonal relations. Beyond that, research indicates that important personality traits include conscientiousness, agreeableness, and Openness (Kuşlivan et al., 2010)

Consciously or unconsciously, recruiters have been evaluating candidates' personalities, favoring those well-suited for the demands of the tourism sector. The 70:30 ratio of foreigners to locals employed in resorts suggests that local employability is hindered by perceived personality

mismatches, corroborated by insights from research instrument development interviews. In response to inquiries about whether skills, knowledge, and personality influence the hiring of foreigners, 4 out of 5 industry experts affirmed this correlation. One expert noted the adequacy of willingness for certain roles but emphasized the importance of a positive demeanor, stating, "we can't have a grumpy fellow at the reception". Another expert cited a scarcity of capable and willing locals, and frequent discipline issues with them, while a third expert emphasized that while skills may not be imperative, a pleasant personality is essential for resort employment.

Thus, the findings of this research align with Kwok et al., (2012) model, FIHRHD, which posits that personality exhibits a positive relationship with hiring decisions. In addition, these findings are in harmony with the conclusions drawn by (Stalcup, 2002; Meagher, 2017) all of whom identified a positive correlation between personality and hiring decisions which is linked to anticipated performance.

Recommendations and further research

Based on the literature and findings of the research the following recommendations are made;

1. It is imperative that job seekers in the hospitality sector thoroughly understand the specific personality traits sought by recruiters. Especially for the locals, in order to increase their chances of securing employment in resorts, potential candidates should diligently project a congenial personality throughout the job-seeking process. This can be accomplished by showcasing the required traits during interviews and by evidencing them in application letters and CVs. Furthermore, to be truly able to possess these personalities, it is imperative that middle school, high school and tertiary level institutions include personality building learning opportunities into the education system.
2. Resorts sector could improve on their hiring process by conducting personality testing by utilizing psychologists in the hiring process. This can create bonds with mental health clinics in the Maldives which in turn could provide a better understanding of the person's traits, and assist in the hiring process.
3. Establish an effective talent management system, and adopt competency-based job descriptions. These descriptions should encompass various attributes, including attitude, personality, skills, knowledge, and experience, to predict an applicant's performance in a new role. Additionally creating job profiles, and informing potential workforce through social media platform what is desired and required for these jobs.
4. Resorts should engage their staff in learning and cultivate essential personality traits through orientation and learning. A combination of learning on personality traits, value systems, culture, motivational factors, knowledge, and skills influence their behavior as hospitality providers. Understanding this influence and aligning their behavior with customer expectations based on their unique needs, objectives, and personalities will enhance the quality-of-service delivery.

Considering the practical implications of this study, it is evident that human resource management should place utmost importance on the recruitment and selection of the most suitable employees.

In practical recruitment scenarios, however, it is often observed that recruitment managers undervalue the significance of specific personality traits (Tews et al., 2010). This lapse can be attributed to a limited understanding of the comprehensive influence of diverse personality traits. The recognition of a personality model that encompasses a range of personality profiles at varying levels can prove instrumental in aiding resort sector in formulating more effective recruitment standards. It is proposed that in order to build this model, comprehensive experimental research on recruitment and selection practices to be carried out in the resort sector of the Maldives.

Conclusions

Effective human resource management (HRM) hinges on the selection of individuals with the right personality traits and talents for the specific job roles. Without a comprehensive understanding of the personality traits sought by employers in the hospitality sector, prospective candidates may find their efforts to secure employment in resorts to be futile. Given that personality is a pivotal determinant in the hiring process, it is imperative for job seekers to project a congenial personality. This can be achieved through various stages of the job-seeking process, such as interviews or the evident display of the required traits in application letters and CVs.

The study's findings underscore the pivotal role of an applicant's personality in hiring decisions, emphasizing that beyond skills and knowledge, the cultivation of essential personality traits is crucial for securing a suitable position. This research holds dual significance. Firstly, it contributes to academic knowledge by illuminating the emphasis placed on employee personality in the hiring process. Secondly, it provides valuable insights for individuals seeking employment in the service sector, both in the Maldives and globally, by identifying sought-after personality traits believed to enhance performance and career advancement. Personality, being multifaceted, presents challenges in capturing its nuances with a limited questionnaire. Our study's questionnaire was constrained by external factors, leading to a reduction in items dedicated to personality constructs. This constraint is acknowledged as a limitation, emphasizing the importance of interpreting findings within the context of these imposed constraints.

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