The Influence Of Human Resource Training Readiness On Star-Rated Hotels Competitiveness In The Covid 19 Pandemic Environment In Kenya

Jane Nzisa,Njenga Gitahi&Symon Kiprop
Kabarak University, P.O. Box Private Bag, Kabarak, 20157, Kenya

Abstract
The hotel industry in Kenya injects KShs. 200B into the economy and most depends on tourists and travelers, the impact of Covid-19 pandemic is huge and is already being felt in the industry as well as other industries associated with it. Strategic readiness to continue operating while managing the pandemic is, therefore, important. However, the strategic readiness of the hotel industry key actors has not been established as yet. The purpose of this paper was to find out the human resource training readiness as a component of strategic readiness of the star-rated hotels for competitiveness in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenya. The study was guided by the Human Capital Theory. The study used a descriptive cross sectional survey research design and used systematic random sampling formula to select 138 hotels across Kenya which were from the target population of 211 star-rated hotels. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules for the top management in the star-rated hotels through purposive sampling. Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis that involved the regression model.The study found that hotels prioritized staff retraining to equip employees with new skills for post-pandemic recovery, emphasizing problem-solving and disaster readiness. However, uncertainty existed regarding partnerships for training and hiring professionally qualified staff. Growth strategies faced challenges, including low international visitor attraction and expansion difficulties.HR training readiness significantly affected the competitiveness star-rated hotels for competitiveness in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenya.The study recommends that there was need for the star-rated hotels to partner with reputable organizations including universities to train the management and staff.

Keywords:Strategic Readiness, Hotel Industry Key Actors, Human Resource Training Readiness, Competitiveness

I. Introduction

The competitiveness of industry and firms has been one of the most important themes of research in the fields of economics and business studies since the latter half of the 20th century. Although the concept of competitiveness of nations was initially proposed by economists (such as; Porter, 1990; Krugman, 1994; Feurer & Chaharbaghi, 1994; Lall, 2001), the term has also gained importance as a subject of study among management scholars during the last decade. Most empirical studies on competitiveness at the industry level have been related to the manufacturing and related sectors, and only recently have some researchers started to examine the international competitiveness of the service sector with a particular focus on the hotel industry that deserves a systematic and critical review (Liu, 2018; Singh *et al.*, 2018; Ćorović *et al.*, 2019). Possessing competitive advantages could be key to the success of the hotel industy as the competition becomes fiercer. Further, developing competitive capabilities could be instrumental in enabling the hotel industry to remain resilient in times of crisis such as the current Covid-19 global pandemic.

Covid-19 and the Hotel Industry

Beginning February 2020, countries globally were thrust into an unprecedented new domain of public health crisis brought about by acute respiratory illness causing novel Corona virus also known generically as COVID-19 or by its more precise scientific name, SARS-Cov-2 virus. The Covid-19 pandemic has occurred at a scale seldom experienced at the scale at which it is currently by any country on earth in the last 100 years. As at 4th April 2021 approximately 135.8 million people globally had tested positive for COVID-19. Of these 2.93 million have died while 109.25 million have reportedly recovered and 23.6 million were classified as being actively infected with the virus (Johns Hopkins & US CDC, 2021). However, the active cases could be more especially in the developing countries where the testing is still not being done *en masse*.

During a global crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic, hospitality industry is the first to absorb much of the impact (Faulkner, 2011). Coppola (2010) noted that the hospitality industry is one of the most vulnerable industries for emergencies. According to Pforr (2016), the hotel sector's vulnerabilities are multi-faceted and complex factors that contribute to risk. For instance, Rittichainuwat (2015) asserted that low-cost destination couldn't motivate tourists to visit, especially hazardous destinations. As such, whether it is man-made or natural disasters, it is very important to be well prepared to mitigate the impact of emergencies and minimize losses. Albattat and Som (2019) further observed that readiness for, response to, recovery from, and mitigation of all emergencies is important to the survival and competitiveness of hotels. Improved levels of readiness will mean better levels of readiness to diminsh the effects of losses already incurred during the period of the pandemic. The strategic readiness through and after the challenges posed by the pandemic is key to the competitiveness of firms within the economies.

Strategic Readiness

Strategic readiness refers to the alignment of an organization's human, information, and organizational capital with its strategy (Kaplan & Norton, 2004; Weber, Geneste & Connell, 2015). As a business concept, strategic readiness emerged in a significant way in the early 1990s with the recognition that an increased focus on innovation sets successful organizations apart from competitors. It was recognized that many skills found within organizations could not be transferred because the current stock of skills focused the efforts of people in organizations in specific directions (James, 2018). If an organization's leaders and strategists have clearly modeled their organization's strategic readiness, it means that they have clearly mapped out the organization's resources in the areas of human, information, and organizational capital, and conceptualized the degree to which the organization is ready to meet the strategic challenges of both today and the future (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014).

The competitive advantages found in modern corporations, non-profit making organizations, and even governmental agencies are increasingly determined by the strategic readiness or capabilities of their intangible assets (James, 2018). Some intangible assets (such as brands and intellectual property) are easier to leverage and have received considerable management attention during the past two decades. Others such as human capital, information capital, and organizational capital have received less attention and often lack significant attention in research. Assessment of strategic readiness has generally related to whether or not an organization has what it needs to face current and future challenges and opportunities that emerge in the strategy development, emergence, and implementation stages (Holzmann & Golan, 2016).

The Hotel Industry in Kenya

This study focused on human resource readiness in terms of skills and training as a key determinant of the competitiveness of the hotel industry in Kenya. Hotel business in Kenya dates back to pre-independence days (Alexander & Njenga, 2012). Over the years the hotel industry in the country has undergone great transition and evolving considerably to impress generation after generation of visitors with different expectations by adjusting their levels of standards of service, luxurious style, hospitality and comfort. This has resulted therefore to the present close relationship of hotel and tourism industries. Consequently, the government has positioned tourism and by extension the hotel business as one of the leading sectors that will enable the achievement of the Vision 2030 Goals. Kenya hopes to be among the top ten long-haul tourist destinations in the world offering a high-end, diverse and distinctive visitor experience that few of her competitors can offer. Among the specific goals is to increase the number of international visitors, increase hotel beds by over 60%, combined with an emphasis on a high quality service (GoK, 2019).

Hotels in Kenya are grouped into different categories based on the quality of services offered. These categories are Five Star Deluxe, Five Star, Four Star, Three Star Two Star, One Star and Budget Hotels to suit all types of travelers. Star rating of hotel is done by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA). According to the TRA (2018), there were 211 One-Star to Five-Star rated hotels in Kenya. Most of these hotels are located in major towns across the country and in some of the best and popular tourist destinations (Muriithi, 2017). The competitiveness of the hotels is also largely leveraged on the product offerings and service quality that are designed to suit customers tastes and preferences. Papadakis (1994 in Reisinger, Michael & Hayes, 2019) says that competitiveness is reflected by the consumer choice between two or more goods competing for the consumer's dollar.

II. The Problem

Since March 2020, Kenya's hotel industry like the rest of the world has been hit by the Covid-19 pandemic whose impact has as well had a negative effect on other economic sectors and is also shutting down some sectors (WTTC, 2020). The hotel industry in Kenya relies on both international travel and tourism has been among the most affected as a result of bookings cancellations, restrictions of movement and especially

night travel, prohibition of leisure activities and suspension of meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) owing to the ban on public gatherings (Cytonn, 2020). This has caused huge losses in revenue, capital flight due to low investor confidence, low liquidity of the sector and job losses as well as other un-quantifiable losses. Further, the WTTC estimates that once the outbreak is over, it could take up to 10 months for the industry to recover (WTTC, 2020b). Unlike other crises, however, the sector has had to face which were short-lived, Covid-19 presents a new and unprecedented challenge mainly due to its longer incubation period and high infection rate (Cytonn, 2020). The key question, however, is how strategically ready the industry is to deal with the situation and any challenges affecting competitiveness. A key element of strategic readiness especially in the service sector in times of crisis is the competence of its human resources (James, 2018). The competitive advantage of organizations in the hotel industry is their human resources. However, as observed by Young-Thelin and Boluk (2012), although the hotels find their human resources important there has been a lack of attention devoted to the development of human resources systems and processes. However, at the firm-level of the hotel industry in Kenya, strategic readiness particularly in terms of HR training for competitiveness during crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic is not yet known prompting the need for this study.

III.   Objective Of The Study
The objective of this paper was to examine the effect of human resource training readiness of star-rated hotels for competitiveness in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenya.
Correspondingly, it sought to test the following hypothesis;
H0: HR training readiness does not significantly affect the competitiveness star-rated hotels for competitiveness in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenya

IV.   Literature Review
Human Resource Training Readiness andCompetitiveness of the Hotel Industry
Employees are major assets of any organization and the active role they play towards a company's success cannot be under estimated. Therefore, equipping these unique assets through effective training becomes imperative in order to maximize the job performance. To have effective training, an organization should follow the training cycle which is a process that includes; assessing the training needs, planning the training, carrying out the training and evaluating the training. Normally any training starts with need assessment where by the difference between an ideal expect for employees' performances and the actual performances are rated (Breiter & Woods, 1997). Sriyam (2010) points out that guest satisfaction is the highest priority for hotel owners and managers competing with hundreds of others. This concern can be achieved by effective personal service delivery which travelers consider seriously when choosing a hotel to stay in.

Over the years, tailoring of customer service has seen more and more customers switch from one service provider to another, this is seen especially in the hotel sector where guests prefer a high level of service, and individual requirements are therefore much differentiated. Undoubtedly organizations worldwide are striving for success and out competing those in the same industry. In order to do so, organizations have to obtain and utilize her human resources effectively. Organizations need to be aware of face more realistically towards keeping their human resources up-to date (Donovan *et al*., 2001). Staff training and development has been identified by various scholars to be very crucial to an organization and its effectiveness. In the light of the above, organizations are therefore encouraged to train and develop their staff to the maximum of their ability in order to enhance their effectiveness. Employee training and development are typically associated with the improving of the performance, knowledge and skills of employees in their present job position.

The hotel industry is a labour intensive sector, directly contributing 6.9% of employment on average in the OECD member countries. The sector is a leading source of employment and job creation, providing a high volume of jobs for low skilled workers, together with higher skilled jobs. The sector employs many seasonal, part-time and temporary workers. With the impact of the Covid-19 crisis continuing in 2021 and reducing capacity for many industry branches, many of these jobs will be directly affected. Under normal circumstances, the sector can help provide diverse employment opportunities for migrants, women, students and older workers, not only in major cities but also in remote, rural and coastal areas, as well as other often economically fragile locations where alternative opportunities may be limited. For example the share of tourism employment represents 15.7% of total employment in Iceland, 13.5% in Spain, 10.3% in Ireland, 10.0% in Greece, and 9.8% in Portugal (OECD, 2020).

The World Travel & Tourism Council has recently warned that COVID-19 pandemic could lead to a cut of 50 million jobs worldwide in the travel and tourism industry. Following travel bans, border closures and quarantine measures, many workers cannot move to their places of work or carry out their jobs which has effects on incomes, particularly for informal and temperary employed workers (WTTC, 2020). Overall, it may be that the nature of hotels and restaurants will change to leaner and more efficient operations, where a balance between smart and skilled labour is sought after. With the incumbent lay-offs, it is possible to offer up-skilling

opportunities to front-line staff, so as to beef up their resumes and increase their probability in securing a job at the time of the market up-turn. This could curb mass-migration to the other industries that could increase the gestation period of the hotel market's recovery phase by reducing specialized workforce (Dogram, 2020). In this scenario, the training and up-skilling of a replacement batch would take a longer time to recover - causing companies innumerable issues. However, innovative methods can be applied to aid the market in boosting and preserving the numbers for when the market finally normalizes.

Training is the process of providing guidance and education to increase the skills and capacity of staff members (Noe & Kodwani, 2018). Further,he argued that, training and teaching the skills necessary for each position in the industry, is important to ensuriing that employees provide great customer service. Organizations are facing increased competition due to globalization, changes in technology, political and economic environments (Falola, Osibanjo & Ojo, 2014). and therefore prompting these organizations to train their employees as one of the ways to prepare them for uncertainties and enhance their performance. It is important not to ignore the prevailing evidence on growth of knowledge in the business corporate world in the last decade. However, despite increasing effects on training of organizational employees by organizations, there is still limited literature on human resource development issues in hotel industry especially regionally (Debrah & Ofori 2006) and increasing concerns from organizational customers towards low quality services in the industry.

Training and development are often used to close the gap between current performance and expected future performance. Training and development falls under human resource development function which has been argued to be an important function of human resource management (Weil & Woodall, 2005). Daniels (2008) mentions that current economic situation tempts organizations to cut their training budgets, but temptation is not legitimate as training offers an organization opportunities to boosts morale and commitment of employees by showing them that they are a valued and important resource. The training itself provides skills and enthusiasm to help participants provide amazing customer service and great customer experiences which lead to service acceptability. Chow, Haddad and Singh (2007) studying 46 hotels in San Diego found that training and development, boosted the hotels' employee morale, productivity and job satisfaction which in turn improves managers' morale. When staffs are not trained the employee will not be able to help a client the way they should, the client will be left unsatisfied by the hotel's service level, and lastly the employee will become frustrated by the company and his or her service level will drop to a minimum (Ryan, 2008).

According to Ngirwa (2009), if an organization wants to remain competitive it has no choice but to train their employees. The amount, quality and quantity of employee training carried out vary extremely from organization to organization. Cole (2002), identified factors which influence the quantity and quality of employee training and development activities like; the degree of change in the external environment, the degree of internal change, the availability of suitable skills within the existing staffs and the extent to which management see training as a motivating factor in work. Training and development are integral to a Hotel's growth and success. Hotels can however under-train their employees by being unwilling to take the time to explain new staff tasks that need to performed. When this unwillingness occurs, Ryan (2008) states that three scenarios may take place –Studies have shown that training programs increase employee satisfaction, employee morale and employee retention, and decreases turnover and hiring rates. Training has been shown to improve knowledge and in turn knowledge improves the delivery of hotel business related activities.

Human Capital Theory

The term human capital was originally used by Nobel economist Becker (1993) to refer to the stored valued of knowledge or skills of members of the workforce in an enterprise. The consensus among scholars is that human capital is critical to the formation and growth of entrepreneurial ventures (Cameron & Smart, 2008). Heckman (2006) referred Human capital in terms of the time, experience, knowledge and abilities of an individual which can be used in the productiin process in an ongoing concern. Human capital theory proposes that the level of education, area of training, previous entrepreneurial experience and business skills influence the growth of the enterprise (Becker, 1993). Human capital is key to strategic readiness and competitiveness. Therefore, consistent with Holzmann and Golan (2016) and James (2018), human capital was considered as the skills and training imparted or developed on the management and employees for pandemic handling. The objective of the study was to investigate how human resource management functions affect the growth more specifically on recruitment, training skill and motivation of which are pertinent to devolved government. This theory is therefore suitable for HR training and competency as it outlines the benefits of time, experience, knowledge and abilities of an individual which can be used in the production process in an ongoing concern.

V.   Research Methodology

Research Philosophy and Design

The study was grounded on the pragmatist philosophy. Pragmatism emphasises in utilising both positivist and interpretivist philosophy and views both of them as continuum rather than contradictions (Smid,

2010). Since it sought to collect both qualitative and quantitative data and also test hypothesis statistically, the positivist and interpretivist aspects in the pragmatist philosophy were useful to the realization of the study.

Descriptive cross sectional survey research design was used. Cross-sectional study design is a type of observational study design. Since the study sought to obtain descriptive and self-reported information to investigate the strategic readiness of the hotel industry towards competitiveness in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenya, the descriptive cross-sectional research design was the most appropriate.

Target Population

According to data from the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) (2018), there were 211 Star-rated hotels in Kenya.These formed the target population of this study. The star-rated hotels were chosen for the study due to their international and local competitiveness and also the longevity in the hotel sector in the Kenya. The accessible population was the top management of the hotels so any one top manager per hotel was appropriate for the study.

Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The 211 number of the star-rated hotels was high enough to warrant the use of probability sampling methods. Therefore, to obtain the required sample size, the study used the Israel (2009) formula;

$$n = N/{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where; n = the required sample size
N = the target population which is 211 star-rated hotels in this case
e = sampling error which is 5% or 0.05 in this case

Fitting this into the formula a sample size of 138 star-rated hotels was obtained. The study used systematic random sampling to select the hotels while purposive sampling was used to select the managers. Systematic random sampling is a statistical method involving the selection of elements from an ordered sampling frame.

Research Instrumentation

The researcher used questionnaire for employees and interview schedule for the top management as data collection instruments in the study. The selection of these tools was guided by the nature of data collected, time available and the objectives of the study. More specifically, the use of both tools was meant to mitigate the biases inherent in them and allow for a wider in-depth study.

Pilot Test, Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments

This study used a questionnaire after a pilot testing for correctness and accuracy on 20 non-participating hotels sample from different counties in Kenya. In order to ascertain validity, the questionnaire and interview schedules were presented to the author'sCo-authors at the to evaluate the tools for face and content validity as well as for conceptual clarity and investigative bias. For the queastionnaire, the author further subjected the pilot test results to the internal consistency method to determine the reliability of the research instruments. The internal consistency reliability index for each construct was achieved by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all the sections of the questionnaire from the results of the pilot study. The items of the instrument yielded high reliability indices of over Cronbach's alpha = 0.70 and were, thus, accepted for the study. According to Cronbach and Azuma (1962), a value of 0.7 or higher of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient shows high internal consistency.

Data Analysis Techniques and Presentations

Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis was done using means and standard deviations to describe the basic characteristics of the population. Inferential statistics involved the use of Pearson's Product Moment correlation and linear regression model to determine the nature of the relationship between the variables with the linear regression model assumed to hold under the equation;

$$y_{ij} = b_0 + b_1 x_1 + e$$

Where;
y = Competitiveness of star- rated hotels in the Covid 19 pandemic environment
b_0 = Model Constant
x_1 = HR training readiness
b_1, the coefficients of the variable to be determined by the model
e = the estimated error with zero mean and a constant variance

VI. Results

Introduction

This section presents the data analysis results and discussions beginning with the questionnaire response rate as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Response Rate

Instruments issued	Instruments returned	Percentage response (%)
138	101	73

One hundred and thirty-eight questionnaires were administered to the respondents and one hundred and one were returned duly filled and useable for the study purposed. This represented 73% response rate and acceptable for the study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of over 50% is considered acceptable.

HR Training Readiness of star-rated hotels for competitiveness in the Covid 19 environment

The objective of the study was to examine the HR training readiness of star-rated hotels for competitiveness in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenya. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 2.

HR training readiness of star-rated hotels for competitiveness in the Covid 19 environment

Statement	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean	St. Dev
Our hotel recognizes that our employees having differentiated skills will be important in the recovery during the pandemic	11	45	10	20	14	3.49	1.445
Our hotel recognizes that clients needs will change and, therefore, require new skills in handling them	17	49	15	11	8	3.57	0.648
Our hotel is currently retraining the staff and equipping them with new skills	20	39	13	15	13	3.34	1.193
The hotel is investing in competency based trainings so as to ensure the skills acquired match the competencies required at work	24	41	11	13	11	3.51	1.203
Our staff are being trained in problem solving	12	44	7	32	5	3.91	0.813
Our staffs are also being trained on disaster readiness to enable them cope with post-pandemic emergencies	25	48	11	9	7	3.74	1.227
We are partnering with recognized institutions to conduct new skills training for our employees	8	31	26	29	6	2.99	0.989
Professional qualifications of the retrained staff will be important in demonstrating our competitiveness	35	49	6	6	4	4.05	0.997
Our hotel is also considering recruiting more professionally qualified staff to boost its staff	7	43	8	36	6	3.05	0.835
Average						3.58	

The results in Table 2 suggest that majority (mean = 3.49) of the hotels recognized that their employees possessing differentiated skills will be important in the recovery during the pandemic. Most hotels recognized that clients needs will change and, therefore, require new skills in handling them (mean = 3.57). As such, most of the hotels were currently retraining the staff and equipping them with new skills (mean = 3.34). The findings also indicate that most of the hotels were already investing in competency based trainings so as to ensure the skills acquired match the competencies required at work (mean = 3.51). Particularly, their staffs were being trained in problem solving (mean = 3.91) and also on disaster readiness to enable them cope with post-pandemic emergencies (mean = 3.74). However, there was uncertainty regarding their partnering with recognized institutions to conduct new skills training for their employees (mean = 2.99). In most hotels, professional qualifications of the retrained staff were regarded as important in demonstrating their competitiveness (mean = 4.05). There was also uncertainty on whether, the hotels were also considering recruiting more professionally qualified staff to boost their staff (mean = 3.05).

Competitiveness of star-rated hotels in the Covid 19 pandemic environmentin Kenya

The study also sought to determine the competitiveness of star-rated hotels in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenya

Table 3.

Competitiveness of star-rated hotels in the Covid 19 environment in Kenya

	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	St.

Statement	%	%	%	%	%		Dev
We have been able to open new hotel branches in areas with high visitor potential	10	9	11	45	25	2.86	1.26
Our new branches are fully resource independent	7	12	8	44	30	2.65	0.957
We have been able to acquire hotels from other investors and rebrand them successfully	12	4	30	43	11	2.82	0.719
Our growth strategies have led to good returns on investment	13	20	23	39	5	3.04	1.258
Our hotels are attracting more international visitors of late	5	16	14	27	38	2.91	1.006
Our bookings outlook has improved considerably	5	15	15	40	24	2.89	1.256
Investors are showing considerable interest in partnering with us	3	25	17	21	34	2.87	0.962
We have been able to absorb many new employees while maintaining a low staff turnover rate	7	22	13	46	12	3.09	0.922
We have been able to increase our product portfolio	9	15	8	29	39	2.80	0.843
Average						3.79	

Table 3 indicates that there was uncertainty on whether the hotels have been able to open new hotel branches in areas with high visitor potential (mean = 2.86) and, as such, majority disagreed that their new branches are fully resource independent (mean = 2.65). The hotels had also not been able to acquire hotels from other investors and rebrand them successfully (mean = 2.82). Most of the hotels growth strategies have not led to good returns on investment (mean = 3.04). The findings also indicate that majority of the hotels werenot attracting more international visitors of late (mean = 2.91) and that their bookings outlook had not improved considerably (mean = 2.89). Further, investors were showing considerable interest in partnering with most of the hotels (mean = 2.87). In addition, most of the hotels had not been able to absorb many new employees while maintaining a low staff turnover rate (mean = 3.09). Most hotels also had not been able to increase their product portfolio (mean = 2.80).

Regression Analysis

Bivariate regression analysis was used to determine the regression model postulated in chapter three held and actually represented what was happening on the ground. The results are given in Table 4

Table 4: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.293a	0.086	0.077	5.047767
a Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Training			

The linear regression analysis results in Table 4 shows that the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable had a model correlation coefficient R = 0.086 which was higher than any zero order value in the table. The results in Table 4 also suggests that human resource training the model could explain up to 7.7% of the variations in the Competitiveness of Star-Rated Hotels variable. This indicates that the model could improve when more variables are incoporated when trying to analyze the effect of human resource training readiness on competitiveness of star-rated hotels in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenya. It was also necessary to carry out an ANOVA to validate the findings in Table 4. The results of the ANOVA are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5
Depended variable: Competitiveness(ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	233.882	1	233.882	9.179061	.002b
Residual	2497.035	98	25.47995		
Total	2730.917	100			
a Dependent Variable: Competitiveness of Star-Rated Hotels					
b Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Training					

The results of Table 5 indicate that there is a significant difference between means of the HR training readiness variable and the variable describing the Competitiveness of Star-Rated Hotels in Kenya (F_o, = 9.179> F_c = 3.96; $\alpha < 0.05$; df = 1, 98; $p < 0.05$). This finding confirms that the model predicted by Table 4 and shows that it is indeed significant. Further, the beta value was used to determine the model linking the human resource training readiness and competitiveness of star-rated hotels in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenyaas shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Multiple linear regression results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std.	Beta		

		Error			
(Constant)	0.911	5.094		0.179	0.858
Human Resource Training	0.656	0.207	0.293	3.166	0.002
a Dependent Variable: Competitiveness of Star-Rated Hotels					

It can be deduced from the findings in Table 6 that Human Resource Training Readiness ($\beta = 0.293$, p < 0.05) significantly influenced competitiveness of star-rated hotels in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenyaas per the model and that could be predicted by the linear relationship;

Y = 0.911 + 0.656Human Resource Training Readiness

Therefore, with regard to the null hypothesis;

H0: *HR training readiness does not significantly affect the competitiveness star-rated hotels for competitiveness in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenya*

It is evident from the beta values in Table 6, that there was a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.293$, p < 0.05) between the two variables and, therefore, we fail to accept the null hypothesis and adopt the view that HR training readiness significantly affect the competitiveness star-rated hotels for competitiveness in the Covid 19 pandemic environment in Kenya. These findings support those of Falola, Osibanjo and Ojo (2014) who observed that organizations ought to train their employees as one of the ways to prepare them for uncertainties and enhance their performance.Training provides guidance and education to increase the skills and capacity of staff members (Noe&Kodwani, 2018). The study also supports those of Ngirwa (2009) who established that if an organization wants to remain competitive it had no choice but to train the employees. Ryan (2008) also states that training has been shown to improve knowledge and in turn knowledge improves the delivery of hotel business related activities.
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VII.   Recommendations andAreas For Further Study

In the light of the preceding findings, this study recommends that there was need for the star-rated hotels to partner with reputable organizations including universities to train the management and staff. The universities could come up with in-house training modules supported by research which could be used to train the hotels' staff in the country to help to keep abreast with developments in the country and beyond for strategicreadiness.

This paper explored only the aspect of HR training but other HR components were not included in the study. This study, therefore, recommends that future studies could be done on strategic human resource management (SHRM) on the readiness of hotel firms for emergencies and crisis containment in Kenya.

VIII.   Conclusions

It was evident from the findings of this paper that majority of the star-rated hotels in Kenya had embarked on training staff for pandemic readiness in line with the demand for best practice within the hotels.Majority of the hotels recognized that their employees possessing differentiated skills would be important in the recovery during the pandemic. Most hotels recognized that clients' needs would change and, therefore, required new skills in handling them. There was uncertainty on whether the hotels had been able to open new hotel branches in areas with high visitor potential and, as such, majority disagreed that their hotels' new branches were fully resource independent. The hotels had also not been able to acquire hotels from other investors and rebranding them successfully. Most of the hotels growth strategies had not led to good returns on investment.

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