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Strengthening Human Resources to Enhance Competitiveness Using SWOT Analysis

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Abstract

Human resource management is a key factor in service industries, as employee competence, motivation, and professionalism directly affect service quality and organizational performance. Effective Human resource practices, including structured recruitment, continuous training, performance management, and reward systems, not only enhance productivity but also strengthen organizational culture and employee commitment. This study aims to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Human resource management, analyze the organization's strategic position using Internal Factor Evaluation and External Factor Evaluation, and formulate strategies to improve service quality. A descriptive qualitative approach was used, with purposively selected informants, including leaders, Human resource managers, and senior employees. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed interactively using the Miles and Huberman model and supplemented with SWOT analysis. Findings show that internal strengths, such as a supportive work environment, strong leadership-employee relationships, and employee loyalty, can be leveraged to exploit external opportunities, including market growth and supportive policies. Recommended strategies include promotional initiatives, performance-based rewards, structured recruitment, and regular training. The study concludes that effective Human resource management is essential for creating a competent, motivated, and service-oriented workforce, aligning internal capabilities with external opportunities, and sustaining a competitive advantage in dynamic service industries.

Keywords

Human Resource Management, Organizational Performance, Service Quality, SWOT Analysis.

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry is a strategic sector that plays a crucial role in supporting regional economic growth, particularly in areas with significant tourism potential. In Central Sulawesi Province, particularly in Palu City, this sector is growing rapidly in line with the increase in domestic and international tourist arrivals following the regional economic recovery and the revival of tourism following the 2018 natural disasters. One- and two-star hotels play a significant role in providing affordable, accessible accommodations, serving as the primary choice for middle-class tourists and local businesses. However, these hotels' competitiveness still faces various challenges, particularly in Human Resources (HR) management and the implementation of sustainable service strategies.

Service quality in the hospitality industry is highly dependent on the competence, motivation, and professionalism of employees who interact directly with customers (Waqanamaravu & Arasanmi, 2020; Gultom et al., 2025). Zeithaml et al. (2018) emphasize that service excellence is determined not only by physical facilities but also by human interactions that create positive customer experiences. In the context of 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu, issues such as the lack of standardized recruitment procedures, minimal training programs, and a non-performance-based compensation system are major obstacles to improving service quality. This situation demonstrates the weakness of an integrated HR development system and directly impacts service consistency and customer satisfaction.

In modern management theory, HR is viewed not merely as a workforce but as a strategic asset that serves as a source of competitive advantage for an organization (Werner & DeSimone, 2006; Dessler, 2020). Notoatmodjo (2023) emphasizes that the quality of development of a nation and organization is highly dependent on the quality of the people who manage it. This aligns with the Human Capital theory proposed by Becker (1975), which posits that investment in education, training, and work experience will increase productivity and competitiveness. In the hospitality context, HR development through competency-based training, career coaching, and fostering a learning culture is key to creating an adaptive, service-oriented workforce (Sadler, 2009; Blanchard & Thacker, 2023; Ansari, 2023).

Furthermore, the Resource-Based View approach by Barney (1991) emphasizes that sustainable competitive advantage can only be achieved if an organization possesses valuable, rare, difficult-to-imitate, and irreplaceable internal resources. In this regard, qualified human resources constitute a strategic asset that can significantly enhance a hotel's competitiveness. Therefore, strengthening human resources is a top priority for 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu to address the challenges of competition, economic fluctuations, and increasingly diverse customer needs. Therefore, the urgency of this research lies in formulating a strategy for improving hotel service in Central Sulawesi through human resource management. The research focuses on how 1- and 2-star hotels can strengthen their internal capacity by implementing professional recruitment procedures, continuous development and training, and a performance-based compensation system to improve service quality and customer satisfaction. Based on this, the study aims to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in human resource management at 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu City, analyze the strategic position of the hospitality sector in Central Sulawesi based on the results of the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) and External Factor Evaluation (EFE), and formulate an effective human resource development strategy to improve the quality of services in the region's hospitality industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Human Resource Development Management and Training

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a vital role in the hospitality industry, where employees directly shape guest experiences and organizational success (Carrel et al., 2006; Gomes, 2013; Al Fajar & Heri, 2013). Unlike personnel management, which emphasizes administrative procedures, HRM treats employees as strategic assets essential for achieving organizational goals (Handoko, 2010; Dessler, 2017). According to Rivai and Sagala (2011), HRM involves interconnected decisions about recruitment, training, and motivation that foster strong employee relationships. In hotels, effective HRM ensures that staff deliver high-quality services, meeting guest expectations in a competitive market (Mangkunegara, 2011). This study focuses on 1-star and 2-star hotels in Palu City, where HRM practices are critical for overcoming resource constraints and improving service quality (Marimuthu et al., 2009). Hotels must align HRM strategies with their vision to build a committed workforce capable of handling operational demands.

Human Resource Development (HRD) is essential for enhancing employee capabilities and organizational performance in the hospitality sector (Thoha, 2010; Lubis & Husaini, 2013; Wibowo, 2020). According to Notoatmodjo (2019) and Wirawan (2019), HRD includes education, training, and career development to build a skilled and competitive workforce. In hotels, HRD equips employees with technical skills, such as operating reservation systems, and interpersonal skills, like handling guest complaints (Topno, 2010; Raina et al., 2018). Training focuses on practical learning to improve specific tasks, while education enhances employees' theoretical knowledge and decision-making abilities. Devi and Shaik (2012) emphasize that well-designed training programs act as a catalyst for employee performance, particularly in service industries where staff directly influence customer satisfaction. Effective HRD requires balancing quantitative needs, like staffing levels, with qualitative aspects, such as skill enhancement (Siagian, 2002; Sudjana, 2015; Suprihanto, 2018).

Small hotels face significant HRD challenges, including limited budgets and lack of structured training programs, as highlighted by Abdullah (2019). These constraints often result in inconsistent service quality and low employee morale. To address this, hotels must prioritize cost-effective training that aligns with operational goals. Peter et al. (2014) note that targeted training improves employee performance and organizational effectiveness, even in resource-constrained settings. For example, training in customer service can enhance guest experiences in 1-star and 2-star hotels. HRD programs must be tailored to local workforce needs to ensure competitiveness (Yuniarsih & Suwatno, 2019). By investing in HRD, hotels can foster employee loyalty and improve service delivery, contributing to long-term success (Simamora, 2014; Sianipar, 2015; Siagian, 2019).

2.2. Motivation Theories and Employee Performance

Motivation drives employee performance in hotels, where positive attitudes are crucial for delivering exceptional guest experiences (Prawirosentono, 2013). According to Rivai and Sagala (2010), motivation involves values and attitudes that encourage employees to achieve specific goals. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory outlines five levels: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization that influence employee behavior. Arif and Tandjung (2013) argue that meeting these needs, from fair wages to recognition, is vital for sustaining motivation in service-oriented industries like hospitality. For instance, providing stable salaries addresses physiological needs, while opportunities for career advancement fulfill self-actualization desires. These factors are critical in hotels, where motivated employees enhance guest satisfaction.

In small hotels, limited resources often hinder the fulfillment of higher-level needs, leading to low motivation, as noted by Kishore et al. (2012). McClelland's theory, which emphasizes achievement, power, and affiliation, further explains employee motivation in challenging work environments. For example, employees who seek achievement are motivated by new challenges and feedback. In Palu's 1-star and 2-star hotels, economic and social factors, such as post-disaster recovery, may affect employee needs, requiring tailored motivational strategies (Yuniarsih & Suwatno, 2019). Managers must understand these theories to design incentives that boost performance. By addressing diverse motivational needs, hotels can improve employee commitment and service quality, ensuring competitiveness in a dynamic market (Sparkman, 2019). Motivation strategies are particularly important in small hotels, where employee retention is a challenge.

2.3. HRD Models and Continuous Improvement

HRD models provide structured approaches to enhance employee skills and organizational outcomes (Robbins, 2003; Robinson, 2017). The Gemba Kaizen model, rooted in Japanese management, promotes continuous improvement through small, incremental changes. This model emphasizes employee training and skill development to improve efficiency and service quality. Yuniarsih and Suwatno (2019) highlight that the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle within Gemba Kaizen fosters a culture of ongoing improvement, making it suitable for resource-limited settings. Hotels can use the PDCA cycle to plan training, implement changes, evaluate results, and adjust strategies. This approach is practical for small hotels seeking cost-effective solutions.

In Palu City, 1-star and 2-star hotels often lack resources to implement structured HRD models, leading to inconsistent practices, as noted by Abdullah (2019). The PDCA cycle can address these challenges by enabling hotels to improve employee skills incrementally. For example, regular feedback from training sessions can enhance service processes. Moekijat (2019) suggests that inclusive HRD models, like Gemba Kaizen, can boost employee motivation and organizational resilience in challenging environments. In Palu's post-disaster context, where economic constraints are significant, such models are essential for sustainable growth. By adopting Gemba Kaizen, hotels can address local workforce needs and improve competitiveness, ensuring long-term success (Peter et al., 2014). Continuous improvement models help small hotels remain adaptable in dynamic markets.

3. Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to provide an in-depth description of human resource development strategies and work motivation in improving service at 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu City, Central Sulawesi. This approach was chosen to gain a contextual understanding of managerial practices, training patterns, and motivational dynamics in the local hotel industry. The research was conducted at several 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu, selected due to ongoing challenges in human resources and service quality. The study spanned twelve months, from January to December 2024, covering preparation, data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Informants were purposively selected based on their position, experience, and involvement in human resource management at 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu City, including hotel owners or leaders, HR managers, and senior employees familiar with workforce management, training, and motivation. From four to six hotels, two to three informants per hotel participated, totaling seven to ten, deemed sufficient for in-depth information and data triangulation. Research data consisted of primary data collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and hotel documentation

and secondary data from official documents, Palu City Tourism Office reports, hotel statistics, and relevant literature. Both data types were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of actual conditions.

The data collection process utilized three main techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly understand work situations and interactions between employees, while interviews were semi-structured so that researchers could tailor questions to the context and responses of informants. Documentation was used to trace written data such as organizational structures, training records, and hotel performance reports. Triangulation was performed by comparing the results of these three techniques to increase data validity and ensure that the findings reflect actual conditions on the ground.

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with the data collection process, using the Miles and Huberman (2002) interactive analysis model, which includes four main stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data obtained from interviews and observations were reduced to identify key themes related to human resource development strategies, training, compensation systems, and work motivation. The data were then presented in narrative form, depicting the relationships between variables in a logical and structured manner.

Table 1. SWOT Matrix and Organizational Development Strategy

Internal / External	Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	SO Strategy (Strategy of Leveraging Strengths to Address Opportunities) Example: Supporting an aggressive strategy	WO Strategy (Strategy of Leveraging Opportunities to Overcome Weaknesses) Example: Supporting a turnaround strategy
Threats	ST Strategy (Strategy of Using Strengths to Address Threats) Example: Supporting a diversification strategy	WT Strategy (Strategy of Reducing Weaknesses and Avoiding Threats) Example: Supporting a defensive strategy

To strengthen the analysis, in Table 1, this study also employed a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis approach to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced by 1- and 2-star hotels in developing human resource capacity. Through this analysis, each hotel’s strategic position was evaluated based on internal and external conditions. The results of the analysis were used to formulate the most appropriate strategies for each hotel category, including strategies for strengthening employee competencies, improving service quality, and developing sustainable training and motivation systems.

4. Results

4.1. Internal and External Factor Analysis

The SWOT analysis as shown in Table 2 was used to identify and evaluate internal and external factors influencing service improvement strategies in the hospitality industry in Central Sulawesi, particularly in 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu City. This approach reveals the strategic position of the hospitality industry in leveraging its strengths and opportunities, and in anticipating existing weaknesses and threats.

Table 2. Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Matrix

Aspect	Analysis Factors	Weight	Rating	Score	Description
Strengths (S)	Good working environment	0.125	4	0.50	Enhances work comfort and productivity
	Leadership role in hotel management	0.125	4	0.50	Effective leadership motivates employees
	Good relationship between leaders and employees	0.125	5	0.63	Open communication creates work synergy
	Employee loyalty	0.125	4	0.50	Reduces turnover and improves service quality
Total Strength (S)		0.50		2.13	
Weaknesses (W)	No formal employee recruitment procedure	0.125	5	0.63	HR not professionally screened
	No employee development procedure	0.125	5	0.63	Employees find it difficult to improve skills
	No employee training program	0.125	5	0.63	Service quality does not improve significantly
	Salary and incentives based on visitor numbers	0.125	4	0.50	Causes instability in work motivation
Total Weakness (W)		0.50		2.38	
Total IFE		1.00		2.38	
S-W = 2,25 - 2,38 = -0,13					

A SWOT analysis was used to identify and evaluate internal and external factors influencing service improvement strategies in the hospitality industry in Central Sulawesi, particularly in 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu City. Based on the Internal Factor Evaluation (IFE) Matrix, the main strengths of the hospitality industry in this region lie in a positive work environment, the leadership role in hotel management, harmonious relationships between management and employees, and employee loyalty. A conducive work environment enhances comfort and productivity, while effective leadership motivates staff, and open communication creates work synergy (Romy & Ardansyah, 2022). Employee loyalty helps reduce turnover rates and supports improved service quality. Overall, these internal factors demonstrate strong potential for creating optimal service, although the total IFE score of 2.38 indicates that internal conditions are still in the average category. The difference between strengths and weaknesses (S-W) of -0.13 indicates that weaknesses slightly outweigh strengths.

On the weakness side, human resource management is a significant issue. The lack of employee recruitment and development procedures results in human resources not being screened professionally and making it difficult to improve competency (Rivai & Sagala, 2011). The lack of training programs has resulted in stagnant service quality, while the salary and incentive systems, which are still based on the number of visits, create unstable work motivation (Waqanimaravu & Arasanmi, 2020). These weaknesses indicate the need for internal improvements to increase hotel competitiveness.

Table 3. External Factor Evaluation (EFE) Matrix

Aspect	Analysis Factors	Weight	Rating	Score	Description
Opportunities (O)	Increasing number of tourist visits	0.125	5	0.63	Potential to increase hotel occupancy rates
	Regional tourism potential	0.125	5	0.63	Drives growth in the hotel business
	Support from local government	0.125	5	0.63	Supports tourism development programs
	Increase in government and private activities	0.125	4	0.50	Boosts demand for accommodation services
Total Opportunities (O)		0.50		2.39	
Threats (T)	Competition with other hotels	0.125	4	0.50	Increases pressure on price and quality
	Impact of natural disasters	0.125	5	0.63	Threatens operational stability of the hotel
	Economic conditions in Central Sulawesi	0.125	4	0.50	Reduces purchasing power and occupancy rates
	Budget efficiency	0.125	3	0.38	Limits investment in service development
Total Threats (T)		0.50		2.00	
Total EFE		1.00		2.01	
O-T = 2.39 - 2.01 = 0.38					

Meanwhile, based on Table 3 external factors indicate both opportunities and threats affecting the hotel industry in Palu. The most prominent opportunities include increasing tourist numbers, local government support for the tourism sector, and high local tourism potential (Warlizasusi & Fathurrochman, 2025). These factors provide a strong foundation for 1- and 2-star hotels to increase their competitiveness. Threats include intense competition between hotels, the risk of natural disasters, and the local economy, which can affect hotel occupancy rates. The total External Factor Evaluation (EFE) score of 2.00, with an O-T difference of 0.38, indicates that external opportunities still outweigh the threats.

Based on the SWOT quadrant interpretation, the SW-W score of -0.13 and O-T of 0.38 places the hotel industry in Central Sulawesi in Quadrant II, indicating a diversification strategy. This means that while external conditions are relatively favorable due to numerous opportunities, internal factors still have weaknesses that need to be addressed (Nurfitasari & Sumadhinata, 2022). The recommended strategy is to strengthen human resources to optimally utilize external opportunities. Suggested steps include developing and implementing structured employee recruitment and development procedures, providing regular training in accordance with industry standards, implementing a performance-based compensation system to increase motivation and service quality, and building collaborations with local governments and educational institutions to support the improvement of tourism human resources (Kotler, 2022).

An analysis of external factors in the hotel industry in Central Sulawesi, particularly 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu City, reveals opportunities and threats that

influence service improvement strategies. In terms of opportunities, growth in tourist visits is the most prominent factor, as increased visitor numbers directly increase the potential for increased hotel occupancy rates (Gultom et al., 2025). Furthermore, the region's high tourism potential is a key driver for hotel business growth, while local government support for the tourism sector strengthens the implementation of service improvement programs and local tourism promotion. Increased activities by both the government and the private sector also increase demand for accommodation services, providing opportunities for market expansion and increased revenue.

Conversely, the hotel industry faces several threats that must be anticipated. Competition with other hotels increases pressure on prices and service quality, requiring management to continuously improve efficiency and competitiveness. The impact of natural disasters poses a serious threat because it can disrupt the stability of hotel operations, from infrastructure to occupancy levels (Waqanimaravu & Arasanmi, 2020). The economic conditions of the people of Central Sulawesi also affect consumer purchasing power and hotel occupancy rates, while budget efficiency is a limiting factor for investment in service development, thus limiting hotels' ability to innovate or improve facilities.

The total External Factor Evaluation (EFE) score is 2.01, with a difference between opportunities and threats (O-T) of 0.38, indicating that external opportunities still outweigh the threats faced. This condition indicates that the hotel sector in Palu City has an external foundation that is relatively supportive of growth and service improvement, provided that internal factors can be strengthened to effectively capitalize on existing opportunities and mitigate the impact of threats.

4.2. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT diagram in Figure 1 depicts human resource development in Quadrant III (negative, positive). This position illustrates significant opportunities for strategic improvements in hospitality industry services in Central Sulawesi through human resource management, but it also faces internal constraints/weaknesses (restructuring strategies).

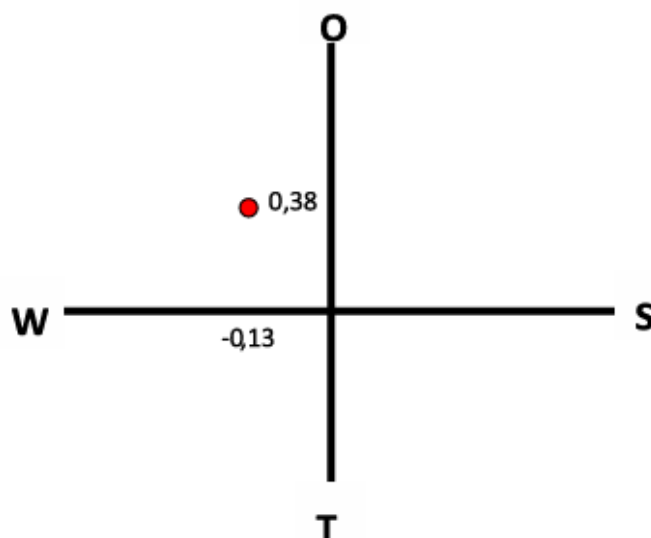


Figure 1. SWOT Analysis Diagram

Table 4. SWOT Analysis of Strategy for Improving Hospitality Industry Services

External / Internal Factors	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Opportunities (O) 1. Increasing number of tourists visits 2. Regional tourism potential 3. Support from local government 4. Increase in government and private activities	S-O Strategies 1. Enhance regional tourism promotion to attract tourists. 2. Collaborate with the local government to promote regional tourism potential. 3. Provide rewards to employees to maintain performance and loyalty.	W-O Strategies 1. Implement formal employee recruitment procedures. 2. Provide structured employee development and training programs to improve performance and service quality. 3. Offer compensation according to applicable regulations. 4. Apply the PDCA method for continuous improvement in HR management processes.
Threats (T) 1. Budget efficiency 2. Competition with other hotels 3. Negative impact of natural disasters 4. Economic conditions in Central Sulawesi	S-T Strategies 1. Conduct social media promotions to attract new tourists. 2. Improve information about the condition of Central Sulawesi to rebuild tourist confidence.	W-T Strategies 1. Implement proper employee recruitment and training procedures. 2. Develop superior service strategies that differentiate from competitors. 3. Establish cooperation with local government to obtain support and funding assistance.
External / Internal Factors	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Opportunities (O) 1. Increasing number of tourists visits 2. Regional tourism potential 3. Support from local government 4. Increase in government and private activities	S-O Strategies 1. Enhance regional tourism promotion to attract tourists. 2. Collaborate with local government to promote regional tourism potential. 3. Provide rewards to employees to maintain performance and loyalty.	W-O Strategies 1. Implement formal employee recruitment procedures. 2. Provide structured employee development and training programs to improve performance and service quality. 3. Offer compensation according to applicable regulations. 4. Apply the PDCA method for continuous improvement in HR management processes.

Based on the SWOT analysis in Table 4, a strategy for improving hotel services in Central Sulawesi, particularly 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu City, can be formulated by integrating internal and external factors. To address existing opportunities, such as increasing tourist arrivals, regional tourism potential, government support, and increased government and private-sector activity, recommended strategies can be categorized by internal strengths and weaknesses.

4.3. Human Resource Development Strategy

For internal strengths, S-O strategies aim to capitalize on existing potential. Hotels can increase regional tourism promotion to tourists and collaborate with local governments to market local tourism potential more effectively. Furthermore, employee rewards aim to maintain performance and loyalty, thereby maintaining service quality and capitalizing on growth opportunities in the tourism sector (Kuslivan et al., 2010). Meanwhile, to address internal weaknesses and continue to capitalize on external opportunities, W-O strategies emphasize strengthening human resource management. This includes implementing systematic recruitment procedures, providing employee development programs and structured training to enhance competency and service quality, providing compensation in accordance with applicable regulations, and implementing the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) method to ensure continuous improvement in HR management processes (Dessler, 2020).

With these steps, hotels can transform internal weaknesses into competitive advantages while responding to market opportunities.

Regarding external threats, such as budget efficiency, competition with other hotels, the impact of natural disasters, and the local economy, strategies are also tailored to internal strengths and weaknesses. Based on internal strengths, the S–T strategy is aimed at maintaining competitiveness and attracting new tourists. Hotels can utilize social media promotions and provide accurate information about conditions in Central Sulawesi, thereby rebuilding tourist confidence and maintaining occupancy rates (Papademetriou et al., 2023). For internal weaknesses faced with external threats, the W–T strategy emphasizes improving human resource management and developing superior services. Implementing appropriate recruitment and training procedures for employees is a priority, followed by developing a service strategy that differentiates itself from competitors so that hotels can compete effectively. Furthermore, collaboration with local governments can be maximized to obtain financial support and assistance, so hotels can better face budget pressures and other external risks.

5. Discussion

The SWOT analysis results indicate that the hotel industry in Central Sulawesi, particularly 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu City, possesses internal strengths that can support service improvements, including a conducive work environment, harmonious relationships between management and employees, and employee loyalty. These factors constitute strategic assets consistent with the Resource-Based View (RBV), which states that valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable internal resources can form the basis of sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). However, internal weaknesses such as inadequate recruitment procedures, minimal employee development programs, and a non-performance-based compensation system indicate that the sector still needs significant improvements in human resource management (Becker, 1975; Bernardin & Russell, 2007; Dessler, 2020).

External factors indicate promising opportunities, such as increasing tourist visits, regional tourism potential, government support, and increased government and private sector activity. This opportunity aligns with the view that organizations must adapt to external dynamics to maximize performance and competitiveness (Sadler, 2009; Holton & Swanson, 2011). However, threats such as intense competition, the impact of natural disasters, the economic conditions of the community, and budget efficiency require appropriate mitigation strategies to prevent internal weaknesses from exacerbating external risks (Noe & Peacock, 2008; Cascio & Aguinis, 2024).

S–O strategies demonstrate that internal strengths can be leveraged to respond to external opportunities. For example, increasing regional tourism promotion and collaborating with the government can expand market share, while providing employee rewards can maintain performance and loyalty. This aligns with Human Capital theory, which emphasizes that developing human resource capacity and competency increases productivity and organizational contribution (Becker, 1975; Ardian et al., 2017; Blanchard & Thacker, 2023). This strategy also supports strengthening a learning culture within the organization, which is essential for addressing environmental changes and maintaining sustainable competitive advantage (Werner & DeSimone, 2006; Sadler, 2009).

Meanwhile, the W–O strategy emphasizes addressing internal weaknesses to capitalize on external opportunities. Implementing structured employee recruitment and development procedures, providing regular training, providing performance-based compensation, and implementing the PDCA method for continuous improvement are all steps aligned with modern HR management practices (Sofyandi,

2008; Suwatno & Priansa, 2011; Rivai & Sagala, 2011; Ruky, 2023). This approach not only improves service quality but also builds long-term employee loyalty, motivation, and commitment (Noe & Peacock, 2008; Holton & Swanson, 2011).

In the face of external threats, the S–T strategy emphasizes leveraging internal strengths to maintain customer trust and attract new tourists through digital promotions and transparent communication regarding regional conditions (Romy & Ardansyah, 2022; Andrian et al., 2022). The W–T strategy emphasizes improving internal weaknesses by developing superior services, implementing appropriate training, and building partnerships with the government to obtain additional funding and resources (Nadler, 1995; Handoko, 2016; Hasibuan, 2018; Noerman, 2023).

Theoretically, these strategies align with the concept of HRD as a strategic organizational asset. HRD functions not only for technical training but also for developing behavioral competencies, leadership, communication, and teamwork (Bernardin & Russell, 2007; Saks & Haccoun, 2013; DeCenzo et al., 2016). This competency enhancement enables hotels to effectively face competition, service innovation, and market changes, while simultaneously fostering a culture of continuous learning (Sadler, 2009; Holton & Swanson, 2011; Blanchard & Thacker, 2023).

Furthermore, strategic HRD implementation can also enhance employee motivation and creativity, in line with the findings of Mejia (2021) and Hermawan and Hasibuan (2016), which emphasize the importance of self-development in enhancing productivity and leadership quality. Therefore, strengthening HR management through recruitment, training, career development, and performance-based compensation is a key foundation for improving service quality and maintaining the sustainability of hotel competitiveness in Palu. This analysis demonstrates that integrating internal strengthening through HRD with adaptive responses to opportunities and mitigating external threats is an appropriate strategy for enhancing the competitiveness of the hotel industry in Central Sulawesi. This approach emphasizes that resources.

6. Conclusion

This study confirms that Human Resource (HR) development and work motivation are determining factors in improving the service quality of 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu City, Central Sulawesi. A SWOT analysis indicates that internal strengths, such as a conducive work environment, harmonious relationships between leaders and employees, and employee loyalty, can be leveraged to seize external opportunities, including increasing tourist numbers, regional tourism potential, and government support. Recommended strategies include increased tourism promotion, providing rewards to maintain employee performance and loyalty, implementing structured recruitment procedures, regular training programs, and a performance-based compensation system. These strategies are expected to strengthen HR capacity, improve service quality, and maintain hotel competitiveness in the competitive hospitality industry.

However, this study has methodological limitations. The qualitative descriptive approach and limited number of informants make the results not fully generalizable to all 1- and 2-star hotels in Palu City. Furthermore, the data obtained relies heavily on informant perceptions and researcher observations, thus potentially creating subjective bias despite triangulation. The study's limited location in Palu City also limits understanding of variations in HR management practices in other regions of Central Sulawesi.

Based on these findings and limitations, further research is recommended using a mixed-method approach with a larger sample size for more representative results. Further research could also quantitatively measure the impact of training programs

and compensation systems on performance and service quality. Furthermore, a cross-regional comparative study in Central Sulawesi could broaden our understanding of effective HR development strategies in the regional hospitality industry.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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