



**The Contribution of Human Resource Development Managers to Organisational Branding in the Hotel Industry in India and South East Asia (ISEA): A Dynamic Capabilities Perspective**

Journal:	<i>Employee Relations</i>
Manuscript ID	ER-09-2019-0375.R3
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Human resource development, organisational branding, India and South East Asia, Employee attitudes, Employee development, Employee relations

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# The Contribution of Human Resource Development Managers to Organisational Branding in the Hotel Industry in India and South East Asia (ISEA): A Dynamic Capabilities Perspective.

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This research explores the significant contribution of human resource development (HRD) managers in building organisational brands in the hotel industry through the lenses of dynamic capabilities for sustaining competitiveness.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Using a qualitative case study design, this study deployed a semi-structured interview research method. It used a purposive sample of twenty HRD managers across twenty different hotels in India and South East Asia (ISEA) to explore their contribution to organisational brands. The data was analysed using thematic analysis.

**Findings** – The findings show the significance of HRD in building organisational brands. From a dynamic capabilities perspective, it was found that; HRD has an impact on fostering brand awareness culture; HRD functional branding enhances the creation and sustaining of quality service culture; functional branding of HRD helps differentiate the brand and quality service, for product development and innovation by linking talent development and growth of key competencies and capabilities; brand training and behavioural training directly influence the right behaviour knowledge and effective communication that is translated into the enhancement of guest experience; and finally, organisational branding through branding culture and employer branding creates organisational wealth.

**Originality/value** – We propose a new conceptual framework for the branding of the Heroes to reclaim the HRD's splendour in the realm of other functions in the hotel industry in ISEA contexts. While we do not claim an external generalisability, we believe that an analytical application of this framework could be relevant in similar environments. The study also claims that HRD practitioners could use parallel literature repertoires from brand management discourse to value their strategic contributions in building and maintaining their reputational position at the board level. Practical implications and further research are discussed.

**Paper type** – Empirical paper

**Keywords:** Human resource development, organisational branding, India and South East Asia, dynamic capabilities.

## Introduction

For several years, the resource-based view of the firm (RBV) has emphasised the importance of core competencies as the critical basis for sustaining competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993). Recently, a large body of research seems to heighten the importance of the human resource development aspect of the production function (Kesti and Syvajarvi, 2015; Faggian *et al.*, 2019; Winterton and Turnbow, 2020), and how it determines customer

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3 satisfaction and firm performance. The strategic role of HR practitioners has also been a topic  
4 of interest in the HR literature (Caldwell, 2011; Nadiv *et al.*, 2017). Yet, Clardy (2008)  
5 contends that the discussion of firm strategy typically ignores the vital role of Human Resource  
6 Development (HRD) in acquiring, maintaining and developing such resources and  
7 competencies. Therefore, he argued for strategic HRD approaches to consist of encouraging  
8 staff participation in strategic planning, developing core competencies and staff protection.  
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11 The HRD literature has abundantly claimed its strategic effectiveness in developing and  
12 supporting the achievement of corporate outcomes. For example, Uraon (2018) underscored  
13 how HRD practices enhance organisational commitment. Chami-Malaeb and Garavan (2013)  
14 pondered on talent and leadership development as key driver determining employee intention  
15 to stay in organisations or leave, while Kucherov and Zamulin (2016) examined the importance  
16 of employer branding. Moreover, the core tenets of the HRD literature is underpinned by the  
17 RBV approach to strategy which argues that organisations possess unique bundles of assets  
18 and the efficient utilisation of these resources determines the difference in organisational  
19 performance (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Barney, 1991; Petaraf, 1993).  
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40 However, there are two perspectives that contend against the RBV theory. First, RBV  
41 assumes that organisations operate in stable environments (Spicer and Sadler-Smith, 2006;  
42 Garavan, 2007). Second, Kaufman (2015) argues that RBV is weak in explaining the  
43 contribution of strategic HRD to organisational performance and competitive advantage.  
44 Equally, the dynamic capabilities theory which explains how firms choose to develop ordinary  
45 and dynamic capabilities by committing to long-term paths or trajectories of competence  
46 development (Teece *et al.*, 1997; Teece, 2014), fails to address how firms develop human  
47 resources to support the process of building distinctive competencies. The dynamic capabilities  
48 theory also fails to demonstrate the process and relationship between how employees as  
49 dynamic assets could be developed as conduits of innovation, and how their skills are utilised  
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3 in fast-changing business environments. Indeed, Boone *et al.* (2018) maintain that if firms want  
4 greater revenues in the long-term than their competitors, they must have access to unique  
5 resources that competitors cannot effectively obtain, such as specialized plants, patents, captive  
6 customers and unique brands. Although Zhu (2004) indicate that HRD has become an  
7 important element for developing capabilities by upgrading skills through training, Som (2007)  
8 considers training as a process of building employee competence as it gives an indication of a  
9 firm's commitment to building a strong culture and organisational development.  
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20 In this regard, the conceptual framework proposed by Garavan *et al.* (2016) suggesting that  
21 the contribution of HRD to the dynamic capabilities hypothesis underscores how firms develop  
22 core competencies. Consequently, we believe that developing dynamic capabilities in the hotel  
23 industry hinges on the effectiveness of the HRD function in embedding the corporate brand  
24 perception into the training of staff (Huy and Zott, 2018). Further, Helfat *et al.* (2007, p. 30)  
25 confirm an inextricable link between dynamic capabilities and the managerial and/or the  
26 organisational processes that underpin them. Salvato and Vassolo (2017) also argue that  
27 strategic adaptation is possible when employees are given the opportunity to act, think and feel  
28 creatively while performing tasks, by envisioning opportunities to improve how the firm  
29 projects their brand. Firm-level innovation is subsequently enhanced when employees are  
30 connected through interpersonal relationships and training engineered through the HRD  
31 function. Accordingly, we consider the strategic connection that the HRD function has in  
32 developing and utilising employees as strategic assets that enable brand development in the  
33 hotel industry. HRD managers could enhance their firm's capacity for change by fostering  
34 individual integration and developing contexts that improve brand reputation (Salvato and  
35 Vassolo, 2017).  
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57 This research aims to answer the following research question: *in what ways do HRD*  
58 *managers contribute to the organisational branding through developing dynamic capabilities*  
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3 *in the hotel industry in ISEA?* Thus, this study explores the significant contribution of HRD  
4 managers, and considers the need **to align the HRD function** with the kind of brand an  
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6 organisation intends to create for the long-term.  
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11 The paper is structured as follows: first, it reviews the HRD and branding literature **by**  
12 highlighting the need to adopt an integrative position to present a new concept on corporate  
13 value creation. Second, it gives an overview of the hotel industry in ISEA. Third, it  
14 demonstrates how the need to develop core competencies and dynamic capabilities depends on  
15 talent acquisition, development and the leadership effectiveness of the HRD function. Fourth,  
16 the methodology will be presented followed by data analysis and discussion. Implications for  
17 theory and management practice conclude the paper.  
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## 30 **Literature review**

### 31 ***The theory of dynamic capabilities explored in relation to HRD***

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33 The work of Teece *et al.* (1997) which focused on how firms develop dynamic capabilities to  
34 achieve and sustain competitive advantage has had the broadest impact on strategic  
35 management theory and practice for nearly three decades. The dynamic capabilities framework  
36 analyses the sources and methods of wealth creation for firms based on firm-specific and  
37 complementary assets. Following the obvious lack of application of this framework to inform  
38 multiplicity of disciplines, Helfat *et al.* (2009) and Garavan *et al.* (2016) brought to the fore  
39 that human capital is the most critical firm-specific resource that can be harnessed, against the  
40 opposition of circumstance, to produce corporate success. Specifically, Kaufman (2015) and  
41 Garavan *et al.* (2016) present clear parallels between the concept of dynamic capabilities and  
42 HRD. They argue that both concepts are underpinned by organisational learning and change,  
43 therefore, the development of firms capabilities ultimately depends on HRD.  
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3         Whilst Garavan (1991, p.1) defines HRD as ‘the strategic management of training,  
4 development and management of professional education interventions’, Horwitz (2015) claims  
5 that less empirical work has been done on the particular initiatives and strategies which seek to  
6 establish an association between HRD initiatives and individual and firm-level performance.  
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8 On the other hand, Swanson (2001, p. 304) underscores HRD as ‘a process of developing and  
9 unleashing expertise to improve organisational systems, work processes, teams as well as  
10 individual performance’. It is from this last definition that organisational policies, practices,  
11 work process and systems emerged as the key constituents of HRD. Interestingly, none of these  
12 definitions captured the need to otherwise see HRD as a brand-building function that enhances  
13 corporate profitability. Hence, this study critically examines how HRD managers contribute to  
14 organisational branding through dynamic capabilities.  
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29         We consider HRD as a practice that is concerned with what HRD professionals do in  
30 relation to developing human capital and building new dynamic capabilities, and how this is  
31 influenced by and influences organisational and institutional contexts (Johnson *et al.*, 2007).  
32 There is, however, the need to distinguish between ‘practices’ as what people engage with from  
33 ‘practice’ as what people do. Practices are described as ‘norms and scripted behaviour’ (Barley  
34 and Tolbert, 1997) or as ‘strategy episodes’ (Hendry and Seidl, 2003). They are central to the  
35 context in which employees operate consisting of institutionalised and organisational routines  
36 (Feldman and Pentland, 2003). On the other hand, practice is what people engage with as well  
37 as what HRD professionals do in relation to their profession. This study refers to this as the  
38 role as ‘given’ which might be assimilated as performative routines, specific actions by specific  
39 people in specific places and times (Feldman and Pentland, 2003). Further, this is akin to what  
40 Whittington (2006) refers to as praxis, which connotes everyday activities and the relationship  
41 between those activities and the context within which they take place (Johnson *et al.*, 2007,  
42 p.27).  
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3 Different conceptual frameworks have been proposed. For example, Korte and Mercurio  
4 (2017) introduce the dynamic HRD approach which focuses on practical outcomes of what  
5 HRD professionals think and do in practice (otherwise classified as the role as given). In  
6 investigating the impact of HRD practices on organisational commitment and intentions to stay  
7 within software companies in India, Uraon (2018) for example, concludes that HRD practices  
8 have an impact on employee retention to stay. It further argues that there are three additional  
9 devices including affective, continuance and normative commitments which were found to  
10 positively influence employee performance. If HRD has such an impact on organisational  
11 commitment, retention and effectiveness, our research explores why organisations in the hotel  
12 industry continue to undermine the function. Thus, it is important to establish a link between  
13 HRD managers' roles and their capability to communicate that to frontline staff, who would  
14 then have the responsibility to deliver the guest experience.

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32 *Proposition 1: Through the role as 'given' and dynamic capabilities, HRD impacts on fostering*  
33 *brand awareness culture.*

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36 Factors such as poor employee branding and high turnover have been highlighted as issues  
37 that are faced by HR in the service sector in India (Agrawal *et al.*, 2012). Likewise, in general,  
38 the hotel industry in ISEA has, and continues to struggle to establish a strong space and brand  
39 for HRD managers who seem to bear the onerous responsibility of communicating the vision  
40 of the organisation to all frontline employees (Chand, 2010). Thus, the employee's role  
41 becomes crucial in delivering the service as communicated and perceived through the brand  
42 (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2017). In particular, the implications of these issues within the hotel  
43 industry require unique competencies, behaviours and attitudes, which have to be ingrained in  
44 employees who have the essential role of conveying the value of the brand to customers.  
45 Juxtaposing these issues with corporate branding concepts, Kumar and Möller (2018) also  
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3 argue that the purpose of a brand is to create a favourable organisational image with the view  
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5 to influencing multiple stakeholders. Thus, we propose:  
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9 *Proposition 2: internal employee branding training communicates brand values to employees*  
10 *reinforcing a common value-based culture.*  
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### 13 14 ***Establishing the relationship between HRD and branding*** 15

16 The study by Nieves and Quintana (2018) suggests that human resource practices influence  
17 organisational performance through key mediating variables. Although they established the  
18 link between HRD practices and innovation performance, they opine that little is known about  
19 the variables that can mediate this relationship. In their study, they utilised data from 109 hotel  
20 managing firms in Spain. They find that in the hotel industry, some HRM practices affect  
21 innovation through their **influence on a firm's human capital** by indicating that HRD influences  
22 the development of core competencies and dynamic capabilities. **However, their** study fails to  
23 explicitly link HRD professionals contribution to human capital through brand communication.  
24 Whilst their western-focused study concentrates on Spanish hotels, it confirms the linkage  
25 between HRD/human capital and dynamic capabilities.  
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41 In examining key definitions on brand, this study argues that the success of individual  
42 brands owes much to the effective brand communication with the staff and the public. For  
43 example, Wells *et al.* (1997) and Kotler (2000) indicate that a brand can be seen as a process  
44 of creating an identity for a product or service using a distinctive name, symbol or design that  
45 adds a unique value which closely matches the needs of customers. De Chernatony and  
46 McDonald (1998) and Dahlén *et al.* (2010) also indicate that the user imagery of the brand, in  
47 terms of people's cognitive and affective disposition, is essential to marketing  
48 communications. Moreover, Egan (2015) points out that brands are the product of an  
49 organisational intent to distinguish themselves from the competition by augmenting their  
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3 products. Despite these key definitions, the strategies needed to create value and positive  
4 associations for service-providing organisations that will be recognised and have positive  
5 meaning for customers, have not yet been firmly established in the extant literature.  
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11 In an attempt to establish the link between HRD theories and the branding literature, this  
12 research agrees with Keller (2011) who confirmed that a brand is not built by accident, but it  
13 is a product of carefully accomplishing (either explicitly or implicitly) a series of logically  
14 linked steps aimed at enhancing the customer experience. Therefore, at the intersection of HRD  
15 and brand marketing, employer branding has been proposed as an effective organisational  
16 strategy to develop firms capabilities to differentiate from the competition. In support of this  
17 assertion, Lievens (2007) agrees that the best approach to recruitment and retention is achieved  
18 by promoting a clear view of what makes a firm different and desirable as an employer.  
19 However, the employees who communicate the values of the brand, identities, imageries to  
20 customers or the external audiences must do so following the appropriate and relevant  
21 behaviours, attitudes and learned standards which, in most cases, spring from the commitment  
22 and the involvement of HRD practitioners and specialists whose responsibility it is to instil  
23 such systems and behaviours into the employees of the firm. We propose that:  
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42 *Proposition 3: Functional branding of HRD helps differentiate the brand and quality service,*  
43 *for product development and innovation by linking talent development and growth of key*  
44 *competencies and capabilities.*  
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### 49 ***Service branding in the hotel industry***

50 Service quality has become a critical factor for the survival of service-oriented organisations  
51 such as the hotel industry. The service marketing theory is underpinned by four distinguishing  
52 characteristics (intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability) making services  
53 different from goods (Yilmaz, 2009). Thus, service characteristics make the service brand  
54 different from the product brand. Moreover, the service brand has more communication contact  
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3 points than the product brand. Consequently, due to the intangible nature of service, it is  
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5 important for service providers to inform customers who they are, and to place an emphasis on  
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7 striking the balance between the corporate brand and service brand (Li and Wei, 2018).  
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11 McDonald *et al.* (2001) point out that the service brand should complement the company's  
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13 overall brand strategy. Therefore, this research argues that under such circumstances, the  
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15 company's senior management should be able to integrate the marketing and the HRD function  
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17 to implement a corporate brand strategy aimed at developing new capabilities to sustain long-  
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19 term corporate performance. De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003) confirm the same line of  
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21 reasoning, whereby they indicate that since consumers cannot evaluate the service quality in  
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23 advance, it is highly important to transfer all early-stage communication strategies to future  
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25 commitment. Whilst this commitment would translate into a consumer's expectation of the  
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27 quality of service to be received, it is equally a well-known fact that excessive brand  
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29 communications lead to information overload, based on consumer subjective factors (Kotler,  
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31 2000). Hence, how firms grasp the acceptable level of brand communication is a difficult task  
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33 because establishing a consistent brand communication strategy plays a decisive role in product  
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35 and service value and perception. Thus, this study asserts that the true brand creator in the hotel  
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37 industry appears to be the integrative role of the HRD function to provide the needed learning  
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39 and development for staff to exhibit the '*service experienced*', as opposed to the '*service*  
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41 *advertised*'. In this sense, the role or the practices of the HRD managers to effectively harness  
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43 organisational resource (human capital) into a capability becomes crucial (Garavan *et al.*, 2016;  
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45 Kaufman, 2015). We propose that:  
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53 *Proposition 4: Brand training and behavioural training directly influence the right behaviour,*  
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55 *Knowledge and effective communication that is translated into the enhancement of the guest*  
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57 *experience (customer branding).*  
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### *Role of HRD practitioners*

The literature on branding has paid a lot of attention to brand co-creation with employees through the Leader-Member Exchange Theory (Punjaisri and Balmer, 2016), employee branding (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2017), and corporate branding (Kumar and Möller, 2018). The lack of research focus on HRD has led to an important question in this study regarding how the task of the HRD function and the practitioners who lead it within service providing organisations could be branded to enhance the development of critical capabilities and competencies. In this regard, Chand (2010) suggests that HRM practices positively impact service quality, customer satisfaction, and performance in India's hotel industry. However, there are scant studies that have evaluated how HRD Managers contribute to this service quality. Whilst the HR department is regarded as the umbrella function, this view does not give a fair share to HRD managers as major contributors to the processes needed to improve organisational branding.

The closest work that deals with this question is that of Mosley (2007) which argues that internal branding is encompassed in the communication of brand values to employees for them to understand corporate values and culture, leading to appropriate behaviours and actions. These strategic actions reinforce a common value-based culture which is attached to some form of corporate mission and vision. Furthermore, Miles and Mangold (2004) maintain that 'employee branding' is a process by which employees internalise the desired brand image and are motivated to project the image to customers and other organisational stakeholders. This internalisation process requires a breaking down of the organisational behaviours, standards and values into key areas of capabilities and competencies to be instilled in employees who then apply this to their roles in the service delivery. It was further argued that employee branding uses organisational systems, structures and internal marketing to motivate employees to support the brand (Miles and Mangold, 2004). We believe that effective customer branding

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3 leads to organisational branding, as happy customers become loyal to the organisational brand.

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5 Thus, we propose that:

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8 *Proposition 5: organisational branding through branding culture (articulating service as a*  
9 *symbol of consumption) and employer branding (helping distinguish amongst differentiate*  
10 *hotels' brands from employee perspectives) create organisational wealth.*  
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14 Our conceptual framework is developed from the five propositions above our conceptual  
15 framework in Figure 1 to examine how HRD managers develop organisational branding  
16 through dynamic capabilities.  
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22 **Insert figure 1 about here**  
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25 In this research, we argue that dynamic capabilities help to promote a reputation for quality,  
26 responsiveness to market trends, and the quality and effectiveness of customer service in hotel  
27 environments. Grant (2016) indicates that organisational capability requires the expertise of  
28 various individuals to be integrated with equipment, technology and other resources. Indeed all  
29 productive activities involves a team of people undertaking closely coordinated actions without  
30 significant direct or verbal communication. This is called 'organisational routines' and refer to  
31 these regular and predictable patterns of activities made up of a sequence of coordinated actions  
32 by individuals (Nelson and Winter, 1982). Our argument, is that functional HRD capabilities  
33 cannot be integrated directly, but only through integrating the knowledge of individual  
34 functional specialists (HRD professionals). We believe that routines form the basis of most  
35 organisational capabilities. Thus, through routinisation, HRD professionals translate directions  
36 and operating practices into capabilities. This thinking aligns with (Teece et al., 1997) who  
37 pointed out that dynamic capabilities are a firm's ability to integrate, build, and configure  
38 internal and external **competencies** to address rapidly changing environments. Therefore, it is  
39 the case that HRD managers develop through learning and development strategies, and  
40 **competencies** that enable hotels to be responsive to their customers needs and wants.  
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3 HRD professionals achieve the development of these **competencies** through different ways,  
4 such as incubating capabilities. For example, they develop new capabilities in separate units of  
5 the organisation and transfer them to frontline staff. This may also occur through managing  
6 processes such as; education, training and experiences of employees to determine the skills  
7 available to the firm; and the commitment and loyalty of employees to determine the capacity  
8 of the hotel to attain and maintain competitive advantage (Grant, 2016). The effectiveness of  
9 this process will improve customer perception of brand through taking ownership of the brand  
10 and establishing a relationship with customers. This will in turn improve the reputation of the  
11 hotels' services with regards to service quality and customer experience.  
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25 Specifically, this research seeks to establish how the HRD function could be recognised for  
26 its brand-building activities in the hotel industry based on insights from the ISEA region.  
27 Though past studies (e.g., de la Rosa-Navarro *et al.*, 2019) have considered the effects of HRM  
28 systems on employee reactions in the hotel industry in Europe (Spain), and (e.g., Alberton *et*  
29 *al.*, 2020) considered the individual competencies for hotel sustainability in South America  
30 (Brazil), our study is different.  
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39 We shift the focus to Asia where we consider the hotel industry in the ISEA region. This  
40 region, particularly India, has witnessed a tremendous boom in recent years because of the  
41 growth in the tourism industry (Kumar, 2014). Moreover, the need to develop the right  
42 competencies and brand awareness has become paramount for the hospitality and hotel  
43 landscape which has become increasingly competitive. This challenging role naturally falls  
44 within the domain of HRD professionals who are still considered as mere training specialists  
45 in most organisations in India and South East Asia (Uraon, 2018).  
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## 56 **Methodology**

### 57 ***Research context***

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3 This research focuses on two international hotel chains with subsidiaries spread across India,  
4 Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Singapore (Lele, 2018). The hotel industry is one of the  
5 largest and most rapidly growing industries in these countries. The Southeast Asian region is  
6 one of the main tourist destinations in the world (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC],  
7 2015). This has meant that hotels in ISEA face a chronic lack of qualified middle-level and  
8 senior managers who are equipped to function effectively in such demanding work  
9 environments (Baum, 2018). India is the country where a significant proportion (50%) of our  
10 respondents live and work, and it has positioned itself as one of the fastest-growing economies  
11 in Asia. India has also grown to become the sixth-largest economy in the world, overtaking  
12 France and also quite close to taking over the fifth position from the United Kingdom, if the  
13 rate of economic activity and growth continues at its current state (IMF, 2018; World Economic  
14 Forum, 2018). Sri Lanka, on the other hand, is a lower-middle-income country with social  
15 indicators ranked among the highest in the ISEA region. Indonesia is also the 10<sup>th</sup> largest  
16 economy and is classified as a middle-income country in terms of purchasing power parity.

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18 Moreover, following the Asian financial crisis, the Malaysian economy has been on an  
19 upward trajectory with inspiring and growing levels of the middle-class population.  
20 Singapore's economy represents one of the world's most business-friendly regulatory  
21 environments and is also ranked among the world's most competitive economies (World Bank,  
22 2018). India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Singapore combined are also considered to  
23 have the largest democratic systems in the world, and the recent ranking of quality institutions  
24 stood at 65, 68, 76, 80 and 36, respectively (Global Democracy Ranking, 2016).

### 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 ***Philosophical stand*** 57 58 59 60

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3 This research aims to gain new insights into the new roles HRD play in hotel industry  
4 environments. We believe paradigmatically that knowledge is not absolute (complete) but  
5 shaped by culture and society (Brunt *et al.*, 2017). Thus, we adopt a nominalism ontology  
6 which claims that reality is created by us and as such does not exist independently of our  
7 perceptions and meanings. Nominalism assumes that there is no truth and there are no  
8 universals but particulars only. Underpinning the philosophical stance of this ontology is that  
9 objects in the world are 'formed' by the language we use and the names we attach to  
10 phenomena. It also argues that facts are human creation (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015).  
11 Nominalism goes further by suggesting that the labels and names we attach to experiences and  
12 events are crucial. In this study, therefore, how the branding of HRD managers could enhance  
13 the perception of corporate image needs to be seen as context-bounded and based on the  
14 professionals' perspectives and languages.

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Our epistemological stance in this research is constructivism, which means that our reality is socially constructed by social actors, who need to be engaged in order to establish how/why they construct/see reality the way they do (Lincoln and Guba, 2013). This choice is based on our understanding of how HRD professionals invent structures to help them make sense of what happens around them. Consequently, our attention was focused on the given use of language and conversations as professionals to create meanings. We also adopted the inductive inquiry research strategy (Blaikie, 2010; Collis and Hussey, 2014) by drawing inferences from the semi-structured interviews, analysing and comparing the facts stated by the HRD managers to identify regularities without reference to any hypothesis. We drew on the characteristics of case study design (Blaikie, 2010; Brunt *et al.*, 2017) to ensure the sample was selected to reflect patterns of employment, levels of education, and broader professional experiences.

### ***Methods and research process***

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3 Participants read and acknowledged an informed consent document which notified them that  
4 their data would be stripped of all identifying information and kept in strict confidence by the  
5 researchers (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015). The semi-structured interviews offered in-depth-data  
6 (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). All the interviews were conducted in English by the principal  
7 researcher and lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. Pre-defined interview guides were used to  
8 ensure that all aspects of the research questions were addressed and that the answers were  
9 comparable. In developing the questions, we drew on the previous literature (Ting, 2006).  
10 Given the lack of data coupled with limited research on the role and influence of HRD  
11 managers in achieving corporate outcomes in ISEA, the study used semi-structured interviews  
12 (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The questions discussed during the interviews centred on three  
13 themes. The first related to the nature of the functional role of HRD and Learning and  
14 Development L&D managers (their functional relationship with HR and other key  
15 stakeholders). The second explored how their role supports the development of dynamic  
16 capabilities and competitive advantage at the regional, national and international levels. The  
17 third explored whether the perception and expectations of their role influence their  
18 contributions to corporate integration, branding and financial performance of their respective  
19 organisations.

### 20 21 22 ***Sampling strategy***

23 The research adopts a purposive sampling strategy (Blaikie, 2010). Our sample comprised of  
24 participants who volunteered for the research by responding through personal contacts of the  
25 researchers who were contacted and asked if they would participate. We recruited the HRD  
26 managers through the human resources departments. 20 HRD Managers in 20 different  
27 properties in ISEA were interviewed and they included 8 men and 12 woman. Moreover, the  
28 depth and breadth of the knowledge of the L&D managers who participated in this study have  
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3 demonstrates significant international management experience from ISEA countries. Table 1  
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**Insert table 1 about here**  
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### *Data analysis*

First, the researchers familiarised themselves with the data through transcription. We then read and re-read key themes in the data noting down our initial findings (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Second, we use an ‘indicator-concept model’ (Figure 2) based on the conceptual framework to code sets of empirical indicators. Empirical indicators derived from line-by-line coding were data presenting either behavioural actions or events, described and taken from interviews (see Table 2). Indicators are sub-elements of a theme/core category (Table 3). A compounded number of indicators helped generate emergent concepts (Table 4). It is believed that the main themes or core categories are the ‘concern of’ or ‘problem for’ the respondents in the setting. They sum up the pattern of what the data was revealing. Once the conceptual code was generated, then indicators were compared to the emergent concept. The building blocks of a theory were further used to create a theory or hypothesis in the interpretation (Burns and Burns, 2008). The coding was grounded in the obtained data. Charmaz (2006, p.43) defines coding as a ‘means of categorising segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarises and accounts for each piece of data (Table 2). The coding of interview transcription provided ideas and understanding about the fundamental empirical problems and processes relevant in the obtained data. Line-by-line coding has the advantages of avoiding a loss in translation and allows seeing the nuances by reading the implicit concerns as well as the explicit statements in the transcriptions.

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**Insert Table 2 about here**  
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3 In the process of this coding approach, Glaser (1978) advocates that coding with gerunds helps  
4 the researcher to detect processes and stick to the data and it gives a strong sense of action and  
5 sequence (Table 2). He further adds that it preserves the fluidity of respondents' experiences  
6 and new ways of looking at them. This helped the **researchers** create a set of indicators  
7 (behavioural or events) which were grouped to form themes/categories.  
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16 **Insert Table 3 about here**  
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19 Categories were derived from the second phase of coding i.e. focused coding. According  
20 to Glaser (1978), this is more directed, selective, and conceptual. The analysis process moved  
21 further, by 'raising categories' to concepts (Table 4), meaning subjecting them to further  
22 analytic refinement and stressing their relationships with other concepts created (Charmaz,  
23 2006). These concepts **provided** interpretive frames and offer an abstract understanding of the  
24 relationship. We derived five key concepts from these themes: role as 'given', employee  
25 internal branding, functional branding, customers/guests branding and organisational branding  
26 (Table 4).  
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39 **Insert Table 4 about here**  
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## 44 **Findings**

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46 Five major themes emerged from our data analysis. The traditional HRD roles, the added-value  
47 of HRD on employees in the hotel industry in ISEA, the added-value of HRD functional  
48 branding, the creation of service culture orientation and the creation of an organisational  
49 service culture that enhances organisational branding. We derived five key concepts from these  
50 themes: *role as 'given', employee internal branding, functional branding, customers/guests*  
51 *branding and organisational branding.*  
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### ***The roles and duties of HRD managers in each subsidiary***

Respondents were asked to provide specific examples about what they considered to be their roles and duties. Our first respondent (R1) pondered critically on the question and confirmed that:

*My role is to plan, create and communicate yearly, quarterly and monthly training plans, in line with the hotel's business objectives and also to ensure the delivery of the programs as planned. I work closely with the operational teams and provide learning solutions by balancing the L&D and business needs. In doing so, I always identify department-specific training needs and plan sessions related to product and service delivery at regular intervals*

This suggests that R1 derives the learning and development (L&D) plan from the hotel's business objectives and also aligns these to the specific needs expressed within the various functional areas of the organisation. This finding is consistent with Garavan (1991) who sees HRD as the strategic management of training, development and management of professional education interventions aimed at gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. This finding also confirms L&D managers as planners and communicators of the organisation's vision and providers of HRD solutions to the business. In a similar line of thinking, R5 declares that:

*I consider myself as a navigator, coach, mentor, change champion, developer, quality assurance manager and brand ambassador of the company. The main objective of my role is to ensure that employees have the right knowledge, skills and attitudes to do their jobs competently and confidently and be the carriers of the company's core values so that they can contribute 100% to achieve the overall vision.*

In this statement, we noted the traditional roles assigned to L&D managers, such as navigator, coach, mentor change champion, that leads to enhancing knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable employees to be well-equipped to do their jobs. Indeed L&D is seen as 'a process of developing and unleashing expertise to improve organisational systems, work processes, team and individual performance' (Swanson, 2001). The role as 'given' which is assimilated as 'performative routines' that includes the specific actions, by specific people and specific places and times' seems to be the themes in these responses (Feldman and Pentland, 2003). It also

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3 appears that adding to what we called the traditional roles (navigator, coach, mentor and change  
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5 champion), R5 believes that not only does he contribute to the overall goal and vision and carry  
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7 the company's core values, he also plays the brand ambassador role which does not seem to fit  
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9 explicitly into the HRD literature. Conversely, R16 presents in detail the traditional roles of  
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11 L&D professionals and declares that:  
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15 *I am responsible for training need analysis, budgeting, instructional designs,*  
16 *facilitation, evaluations or service quality audits, training vendor management,*  
17 *maintaining relationships with educational bodies for potential talent recruitment &*  
18 *support, liaising with external trainers to come up with training needs from external*  
19 *resources, handling management trainee and internship programs*  
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23 These traditional L&D roles, although they are not redundant and continue to be the bedrock  
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25 of the function, do little to raise the profile of the function, yet building talent pipelines, and  
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27 acting as a relationship builder with external bodies requires brand communication to the  
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29 stakeholders. Korte and Mercurio (2017) introduced the pragmatic HRD framework which  
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31 focuses on practical outcomes of what HRD professionals think and do in practice ('the role as  
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33 given'). The role as 'given' lead to practical outcomes of the function and the practice of HRD  
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35 (Mehdiabadi and Li, 2016), but it hardly highlights the branding function of the managers.  
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37 Therefore, we conclude that the role as given appears not to reflect the power of branding  
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39 communication that is embedded in the HRD function in the ISEA contexts, and the specialists  
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41 who take on these roles to ensure that employees develop the capabilities aimed at translating  
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43 the advertised-brand into experienced-brand. This confirms our *Proposition 1: Through the*  
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45 *role as 'given' and dynamic capabilities, HRD impacts on fostering brand awareness culture.*  
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#### 50 51 ***Added-value of HRD roles and duties to organisational objectives***

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53 The subsequent set of questions we asked focused on establishing how the roles of the L&D  
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55 managers add value to the overall performance of the organisation. The key theme that emerged  
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57 from this line of questioning highlighted 'the added-value of HRD function on employee  
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3 performance in the ISEAs hotel industry'. This study presents this concept as 'employee  
4 branding'. In exploring the basis upon which to establish and advance our conceptual  
5 framework and practical discussion on this idea, R6 points out that:  
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10 *At the individual level, we work to enhance motivation, stimulation by focusing on skills  
11 and knowledge development which also leads to job advancement, personal growth,  
12 reduction in stress and work-life balance*

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14 The view of this respondent aligns with the findings of Uraon (2018) who concludes that HRD  
15 practices have a significant impact on the employee motivation and innovation. Furthermore,  
16 it also agrees further that there are three additional commitments devices: affective (creation  
17 of job advancement), continuance (reduction in stress and work-life balance), and normative  
18 (stimulation and development of competencies) that are found to positively affect employee  
19 performance. In contrast to this finding, R8 declares that:  
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28 *I interact with each employee at least once a month, it helps me to sense their level of  
29 job satisfaction or identify any gap that arises. Doing so enables me to determine ways  
30 to assist the employee to grow their talent. Sometimes it means guiding them constantly,  
31 being there for everyone and being trusted by all*

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34 This respondent aims to ensure that, through interactions, she guarantees the satisfaction of the  
35 talent, growth, assistance, guidance, and being there. This finding enshrines the unique added  
36 value which matches the employees needs closely to that of the organisation (De Chermatony  
37 and McDonald, 1998). In essence, this brand communication strategy leads to employee  
38 branding (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2017). It also strengthens what employees imagine about the  
39 brand in terms of their cognitive and affective disposition to the brand (Dahlén *et al.*, 2010).  
40 Therefore, we concur with Nieves and Quintana (2018) that HRD practices affect innovation  
41 on the assumption that L&D managers influence the process of human capital development.  
42 Thus, we propose that HRD promotes employee branding; thus:  
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55 *Proposition 2: internal employee branding training communicates brand values to employees,  
56 reinforces a common value-based culture.*  
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### ***The importance of HRD role for business success***

Respondents were asked to explain how the L&D role is important for the success of their individual properties. The theme derived from the answers of the respondents points towards the added value of the HRD function. In probing the idea that functional branding or the HRD role leads to the development of core competencies, stronger corporate image, improved organisational performance and outcomes, participants were asked why their L&D role is important for the success of the business. The theme derived from the answers of the respondents confirms that the HRD role provides substantial immediate benefits which have direct implications for the long-term profitability of their respective properties. In this regard, R17 indicates that:

*Although L&D is looked at as a very redundant function, given the right support and focus, there will be tangible changes over a period of time to the success of our business. As mentioned before, it's only well-trained, proficiently developed staff who remain motivated to work for organisations to achieve their objectives. Well-equipped staff results in great customer service experiences, leading to repeat business, particularly in the hotel industry. Moreover, in this changing world with high attrition, we must keep our staff motivated and give them enough opportunities. There is a huge cost involved when an employee leaves, i.e. hiring, recruitment and training of new staff. It will also take a while to get the new team member trained to current processes and standards. If we keep our current team members motivated through development, it will not only save those costs but of course lead to better customer experiences*

It is ironic to note that this respondent started by drawing out the fact that the L&D function is not highly regarded. This finding concurs with Uraon (2018) who suggest that HRD professionals are still considered as 'mere' training specialists in most organisations in ISEA. R17 goes on to stress the importance of the function in impacting excellence in customer service experiences, leading to repeat business. This finding aligns with Fraj *et al.* (2015) who examine how environmental strategies and organisational competitiveness in the hotel industry are prompted by learning and innovation. Thus, learning is the key determinant of environmental success and organisational competitiveness.

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3 R17 further demonstrates how human capital formation depends on L&D activities that  
4 contribute to better customer experiences. It is indeed true that this HRD manager sees the  
5 direct relationship between the functional activities of the HRD role and customer experiences  
6 for service-providing organisations in general and the hotel industry in particular (Keller,  
7 2011). This finding is contrary to the assertion that there is a lack of evidence about how HRD  
8 managers contribute to the service quality and customer satisfaction. This study claims that the  
9 HRD function does not get a fair share of resources and support from the corporate boards of  
10 our sampled hotels as a major contributor to these successes. As Chand (2010) suggests that  
11 HRD practices impact positively on service quality, customer satisfaction and performance in  
12 ISEA, we propose that the added-value of branding the HRD function conveys a strong  
13 communication of the brand to customers who experience the result of this value within the  
14 hotel industry. R18 puts it in neatly:

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31 *Because you want to be successful and win the competition in the market you need to*  
32 *differentiate your brand and quality of service. Whereas product development,*  
33 *innovation and technology can play an important role, it can be copied by competitors,*  
34 *but the culture of quality service delivery and core values cannot be copied. In this*  
35 *sense, L&D managers play a crucial role in developing, instilling and embedding the*  
36 *culture and core values using systematic approaches and best practices which*  
37 *enhances the success of the business.*  
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40 The respondent appears to draw out a clear link between the quality service culture and core  
41 values to the functional role of HRD and its relevance towards corporate performance. This  
42 finding agrees with Thite (2015) who argues cogently that the management and development  
43 of people will remain crucial in gaining and maintaining competitive advantage at the micro  
44 (organisational) and macro (national) levels. In essence, we claim that branding the HRD  
45 function has the potential to create a quality service culture and core value system not only in  
46 the hotel industry in the ISEA, but for most service providing organisations as well. *Proposition*  
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*4: Functional branding of HRD helps differentiate the brand product and quality service, for*

product development and innovation by linking talent development and growth of key competencies and capabilities.

### ***The added-value of HRD function to customers needs/wants***

To further our enquiry on the contribution of the HRD function towards the enhancement of customers needs/wants, our question assessed how the HRD function adds value to customer expectations. Our finding confirmed that the creation of a service culture that enhances customer orientation and satisfaction in the hotel industry in the ISEA context is dependent on the effectiveness of the HRD function in general and L&D managers in particular. In this sense, three of our respondents including R14, R19, and R9 agreed that:

*The key contribution of L&D has not been very tangibly communicated and supported. However, it is with the help of effective L&D intervention that our team members can create a memorable guest experience. Each guest experience increases the possibility of return business and of course the revenue related to that. Also, as we continue to develop our team members, they stick around with the organisation creating a strong culture that again has the impact of how guests see us and how we are represented in the minds of our customers (R14)*

*'L&D ensures that the guest satisfaction score is in line with KPI (Key Performance Indicator) of the corporate values, culture and vision of the hotel' (R19)*

*'The role of L&D managers definitely leads to more business as a trained employee faces our guests in a confident and positive manner' (R9)*

These three participants appreciate the clear link between the effective branding of the HRD function with an improvement in guest experience and guest satisfaction score. They underscored the fact that a trained employee faces their guests in a confident and positive manner (De Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003). This finding suggests that HRD is the major player in the creation of a service culture that enhances customer orientation and experience. It is also important in the sense that, to the best of our knowledge, no other studies have claimed such a direct link between the effectiveness of the HRD function and customer experience. The branding literature argues that due to the intangible nature of service, it is important for service firms to inform customers who they are, **emphasising on striking** the balance between business



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3 and the level of service branding (Li and Wei, 2018). Thus, this study stresses the importance  
4 of the HRD function in translating the organisation's brand value to employees by embedding  
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6 the corporate brand into employee training programmes. Respondent 4 mentioned that:  
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10 *Conducting key communication workshops, brand training and behavioural training*  
11 *directly influence the right behaviour and the delivery of quality customer service*  
12 *experience in a right mental attitude. Knowledge and effective communication, in turn,*  
13 *leads to enhanced guest experience and contributing to the overall business success*  
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16 This respondent suggests that the organisational brand value is translated by HRD managers to  
17 employees who have the sole responsibility of conveying the image to customers. Therefore,  
18 L&D managers primary responsibility is delivered by impacting the behaviours and knowledge  
19 of the employees who then bears the responsibility of influencing guests experience. Yet again,  
20 the current HRD literature appears not to be able to articulate this clearly. This is because the  
21 quality service culture orientation positions branding as a process of creating an identity for a  
22 service using distinctive name or symbol or design (Wells *et al.*, 1997; Kotler, 2000).  
23 Therefore, as a consequence, this study proposes that in the creation of a service culture that  
24 enhances customer orientation in the hotel industry in ISEA, the HRD function is the only link  
25 between the vision of the organisation and brand image that customers actually experience.  
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40 *Proposition 4: Brand training and behavioural training directly influence the right behaviour*  
41 *knowledge and effective communication that is translated into the enhancement of the guest*  
42 *experience (customer branding).*  
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#### 48 ***The added-value of the HRD function to organisational branding***

49 This aspect of our questions sought answers to how the HRD function enhances organisational  
50 branding based on the level of value that is added to organisations. In this regard, our  
51 respondents assert that HRD enhances the organisational branding by creating culture and  
52 brand awareness which enables the firm to enhance their performance and profits. For example,  
53 R15 indicates that:  
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*As far as the organisational value is concerned, I deliver employee satisfaction, cost savings, efficiency and service quality, reduction in absenteeism and employee turnover. More importantly, I have been able to successfully introduce a customised integrated change management system which is unique to our hotel to achieve better employee performance as well as staff retention*

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Moreover, R8 insists that her role **comprises** of creating a culture of learning which in turn impacts **s** both productivity and understanding of organisational branding:

*Part of my role consists of creating a culture of sustainable learning environment where the organisation's productivity increases, but also makes the employees understand the organisational culture and building industrial relations with the hotel and the educational institutions where we usually recruit from*

In the same vein, R12 proves that HRD is responsible to ensure that values, cultures and history pertain to organisational branding and further enhances the hotel's reputation:

*L&D ensure that values, cultures, history are translated to team members, as a result, this increases employee happiness, and guest happiness, retention and great places to work for and these factors enriches the overall reputation of the hotel*

Extant literature asserts that corporate branding focuses on brand co-creation with employees through the Leader-Member Exchange Theory (Punjaisri and Balmer, 2016). In a recent study, Punjaisri and Wilson (2017) argue that employee branding improves organisational performance but **it often** appears that the emphasis is never on how HRD helps foster the branding of the organisation, and how L&D managers strengthen organisational culture by translating such ideals, values, culture and history into the daily activities of individual employees.

*Proposition 5: Organisational branding through branding culture (articulating service as a symbol of consumption) and employer branding (helping distinguish amongst differentiate hotels' brands from employee perspectives) create organisational wealth.*

## Discussion

This research explores the ways **s** in which HRD managers contribute to organisational branding through developing dynamic capabilities in the hotel industry in ISEA. Helfat *et al.* (2007, p.

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3 30) posit that there is an inextricable link between dynamic capabilities and the organisational  
4 and managerial processes that underpin them. Considering HRD as a practice, Feldman and  
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6 Pentland (2003), indicate what HRD professionals do concerning developing human capital  
7 and building new dynamic capabilities. Johnson *et al.* (2007) argued that HRD is influenced  
8 by and influences organisational and institutional contexts. Thus, this study argues that HRD  
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10 (as a practice) does not reflect the power of branding communication that is embedded in the  
11 HRD function and the associated authority that is given to the L&D specialists to carry out  
12 these responsibilities. This finding agrees with the extant literature in that HRD professionals  
13 do effectively develop human capital (Nieves and Quintana, 2018) and new dynamic  
14 capabilities (Garavan *et al.*, 2016; Salvato and Vassolo, 2017).

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27 From a practice perspective, this study argues that HRD promotes employee branding  
28 through the learning intervention programmes designed and implemented by L&D managers  
29 (Keller, 2011). This is a pertinent finding as it concurs with Lievens (2007) who asserts that  
30 the best approach to recruitment and retention is to promote a clear view of what makes a firm  
31 different and desirable as an employer. Although previous literature on HRD has elaborated on  
32 employer branding (Cascio, 2014), employee branding (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2017), and  
33 corporate branding (Kumar and Möller, 2018), there are no studies so far that claim that HRD  
34 functional branding enhances the creation of quality service culture in the hotel industry in the  
35 ISEA. This is important because HRD as a practice adds to the creation of the image of the  
36 function and the creation of new dynamic capabilities. Finally, the study argues that HRD also  
37 adds value to the creation of organisational service culture that enhances branding at the micro  
38 and macroeconomic levels.

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Based on our conceptual framework (Figure 1) that explains the new position of the HRD  
function branding, the role of L&D managers, the function itself has an auspicious role in  
developing dynamic capabilities to influence customer brand perception and ultimately

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3 corporate cash flows. The conceptual framework aligns our key findings by proposing that the  
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5 ‘role’ as ‘given’ in HRD practice is often associated with administrative tasks which seem to  
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7 have some level of mundane outcomes. This is what makes both practitioners and scholars  
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9 think that HRD is limited in its organisational outcomes. As a result, we propose that HRD  
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11 thinkers begin to take a fresh look at the branding role of HRD within service-providing  
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13 organisations. The aim is to foster brand awareness and a ‘grooming’ culture. Indeed, seen  
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15 from this perspective, the pre-conditionality and presuppositions would possibly be faded out  
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17 and the HRD role could be regarded as the agent that promotes employee branding, functional  
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19 branding, customer branding and ultimately organisational branding which leads to corporate  
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21 financial performance.  
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## 28 **Conclusion and implications**

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31 This research offers interesting insights for businesses and HR practitioners in today’s business  
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33 market. It also adds to the ongoing discussion on the linkage between a company’s image and  
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35 brand, and HRD (App and Büttgen, 2016). This research explores the significant contribution  
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37 of HRD managers in building brands in the hotel industry. It deliberates on aligning the  
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39 branding of HRD function with organisational branding. Although many studies have claimed  
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41 the strategic importance of HRD in enhancing human capital in organisations, this study claims  
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43 that there is a layer of the strategic contribution that derives from HRD activities that are not  
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45 researched yet. We found that HRD managers need to reclaim new territories by developing  
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47 new programmes aimed at developing capabilities and competencies to achieve competitive  
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49 advantage. Moreover, the current roles as given do not reflect the authority of HRD managers  
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51 in contributing to employee branding, functional branding, customer branding and ultimately  
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53 organisational branding. From a practical angle, the perspective on policy change could begin  
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55 from incorporating the HRD function into strategic decision-making forums concerning  
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3 branding design and brand functions in organisations. This may require a situation where the  
4 top-management team (TMT) include HRD at the board level decision-making process.  
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6 Furthermore, it may also be beneficial to have changes in perspectives in HRD educational  
7 content and curriculum (both in the intra-organisational setting and at the tertiary institutional  
8 level). This could enhance the ability of future and current HRD professionals to learn about  
9 new dimensions which could allow them to engage in decision-making at the TMT level before  
10 entering the HR practice (before the job) and whilst practicing in the field (after the job).  
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20 Differing from the traditional literature, our research argues that HRD managers are  
21 involved in the reputational building of brands through the development of new capabilities  
22 and core competencies to improve staff behaviours, and to deliver brand promises made to  
23 customers. The model developed in this research reflects the dynamic capabilities of HRD  
24 managers within the ISEA context as strong contributors of organisational branding.  
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33 The findings of this study have also opened up new avenues for research, in that corporate  
34 brand managers may claim that they are the ultimate brand image creators in organisations. We  
35 argue that in service-oriented businesses (e.g. the hotel industry), HRD managers are the main  
36 proponents of cultivating talents using innovative techniques to impact on behaviours, attitudes  
37 and culture which is needed to create brand awareness and brand confidence in employees who  
38 translate these to the customers. Although our proposed conceptual framework based in the  
39 ISEA context, our intention is to claim that it is analytically firm, relevant and applicable in  
40 similar environments. We also understand that the aim of seeking an external generalisation  
41 was not our intended strategy, but, in our effort to convey such findings to practitioners, we  
42 believe that HRD practitioners should use parallel literature repertoires from brand  
43 management discourse to value their strategic contributions in building and maintaining their  
44 reputational position at the board level. We suggest that further research should be carried out  
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3 to investigate how HRD managers could use reflective practices to improve their professional  
4 growth and the learning and development function through reflective practices (Koukpaki and  
5 Adams, 2020).  
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**Table 1: Characteristics of sampled respondents**

<b>Respondent Code</b>	<b>Area of Operation &amp; Job Position</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>
Respondent R1	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	First degree	7
Respondent R2	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Male	Masters degree	15
Respondent R3	Corporate Head office – Learning and Development Manager	Male	Masters degree	5
Respondent R4	Corporate Head office – Regional Head, Learning and Development	Female	Masters degree	8
Respondent R5	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Male	First degree	4
Respondent R6	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Male	First degree	10
Respondent R7	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	Masters degree	7
Respondent R8	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	Masters degree	3
Respondent R9	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	Masters degree	7
Respondent R10	Corporate Head office – Regional Learning and Development Manager	Male	Masters degree	5
Respondent R11	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	First degree	3
Respondent R12	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	First degree	20
Respondent R13	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	First degree	5
Respondent R14	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	Masters degree	4
Respondent R15	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	Masters degree	9
Respondent R16	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	Masters degree	4
Respondent R17	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Male	Masters degree	5
Respondent R18	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Female	Masters degree	22
Respondent R19	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Male	Masters degree	10
Respondent R20	HR – Learning and Development Manager	Male	Masters degree	7
<b>Total of 20 L&amp;D managers were interviewed at 20 different properties</b>	<b>3 L&amp;D Managers based in Regional Head Office and 17 within different subsidiaries in the region</b>	<b>8 men, 12 women</b>	<b>6 respondents hold first degrees and 14 have earned their masters degrees</b>	<b>160 cumulative years of experience</b>

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<b>based in the ISEA region</b>				
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Note: HRD = Human Resource Development L&DM = Learning and Development Managers HRM = Human Resource Management

Employee Relations

**Table 2: Coding using gerund (line-by-line) leading to indicators**

Respondents	Answers	Coding using gerund (line-by-line) leading to indicators
R. 4	<i>R4: My roles consist of <u>ensuring the culture of training is followed and practiced in every department. For example, there is regular training; constant check on staff following standard operating procedure, monitoring performance development plan or career development plans, engaging in talent development. Supporting department heads with identifying training needs as per guest feedback and deliver related training programs, <u>manage department trainers and support them through constant mentoring, coaching and feedback.</u></u></i>	Ensuring the culture of training, Practicing Being regularly trained Checking monitoring Supporting department heads with identifying Delivering related programs Managing department trainers Supporting them
R8	<i>R8: 'I <u>interact</u> with each talent at least once a month, it helps to <u>sense</u> their level of job satisfaction, or any gap arises. - <u>Assisting the talent to grow</u> - <u>Guiding them constantly</u> - <u>Being there for everyone</u> - <u>Being trusted by all</u>'</i>	Interacting with each talent Helping to sense Assisting the talent grow Guiding them Being there for them Being trusted

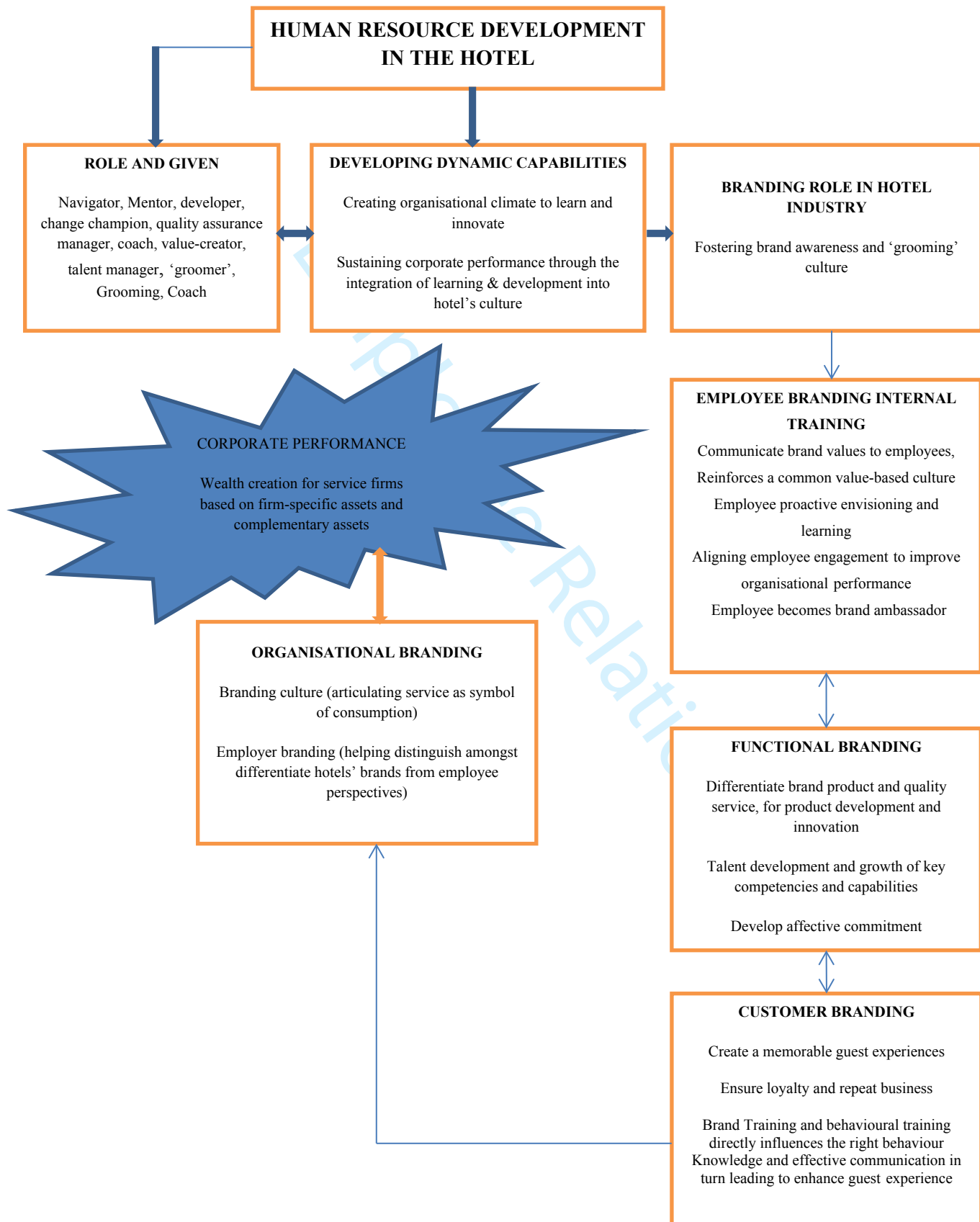
**Table 3: Behavioural indicators leading to Themes (categories)**

Behavioural and events indicators	Theme
Ensuring the culture of training, Supporting department heads with identifying Managing department trainers Interacting with each talent Assisting the talent to grow Managing department trainers Being there for them	<i>The roles and duties of HRD managers in each property (hotel)</i>
Catching the employees Boosting their knowledge Welcoming them Working to motivate them Being trusted by all	<i>Added-value of the HRD roles and duties to the overall organisational business</i>
Creating culture and brand awareness Improving service culture, operational expertise Driving loyalty Having a core responsibility to showcasing the brand value Ensuring adherence to all brand standards Promoting the organisational brand	<i>The creation of organisational service culture enhances organisational branding in the Hotels industry in ISEA</i>

**Table 4: Themes leading to concepts**

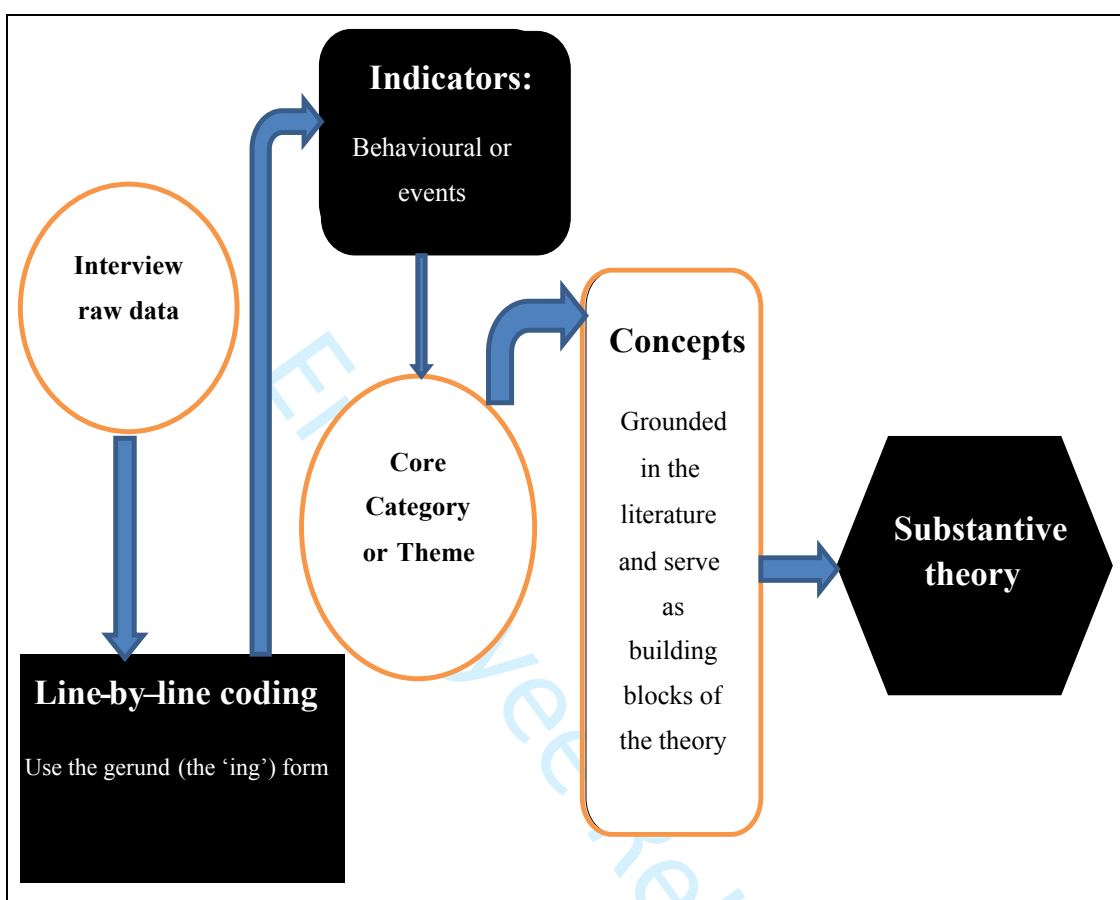
<b>Themes /categories</b>	<b>Concepts</b>
‘The roles and duties of HRD managers in each property (hotel)’	<i>Traditional HRD roles: ‘role as given’</i>
‘Added-value of the HRD roles and duties to the overall organisational business’	<i>Employee Internal Branding</i>
‘The ceation of organisational service culture enhances organisational branding in the Hotels industry in ISEA’	<i>Organisational Branding</i>

**Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the HRD managers' contribution in developing organisational branding through dynamic capabilities.**



### Data Analysis procedure

Figure 2: 'Indicator-concept model'





**Manuscript ID ER-09-2019-0375****Paper Title: " The Contribution of Human Resource Development Managers to Organisational Branding in the Hotel Industry in India and South East Asia (ISEA): A Dynamic Capabilities Perspective."**

Prof. Dennis Nickson

**Editor in Chief, Employee Relations****Authorial Response to Reviewers' Comments**

We are indeed grateful for the opportunity accorded us to revise and resubmit our paper to the Employee Relations. We have taken into full consideration the comments made by the anonymous reviewers and that of the editor and have consequently revised the manuscript along the suggestions made. We hope the revised version satisfactorily addresses all the concerns and comments of the reviewers. We list below the actions we have taken in this revision and the pages where it can be found.

<b>Reviewer #1</b>		
<b>COMMENT NO.</b>	<b>REVIEW TEAM COMMENTS</b>	<b>AUTHORIAL RESPONSES TO COMMENTS</b>
R1 (1)	<p>Well done for your effort, but in my view, there is still one more correction that you have to consider in the epistemological section of the methodology.</p> <p>You highlighted nominalism as the "ontology which claims that reality is created by us and as such does not exist independently of our perceptions and meanings", so I'm not entirely sure if it's appropriate to state that interpretivism is the epistemology of the study? Note: interpretivism is a philosophy. On the other hand, epistemology could be: progressivism, empiricism, idealism, rationalism, constructivism etc. However, based on your choice of nominalism, perhaps you may consider constructionism/constructivism, which means that our reality is socially constructed by social actors, who need to be engaged/communicated, in order to establish how/why they construct/see reality the way they do</p>	<p>We would like to say thank your encouraging comment and the suggestion made.</p> <p>We have now followed your suggestion. We have used constructivism as our epistemology in line with our selected ontology (nominalism).</p> <p>This change can be seen on page 14 of the revised manuscript.</p>

<b>Reviewer #2</b>		
<b>COMMENT NO.</b>	<b>REVIEW TEAM COMMENTS</b>	<b>AUTHORIAL RESPONSES TO COMMENTS</b>
R2 (1)	<p>Comments:</p> <p>This is a much improved version and worthy of publication with a few edits.</p> <p>A few areas need to be edited in order to enhance the generally improved nature of the overall communication as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* in the abstract section, improve the findings section;</li> <li>* improve the yellow parts on page 2;</li> <li>* on page 6, avoid starting the sentence with 'But';</li> <li>* pages 11 and 12, maintain consistency in the use of 'competencies';</li> <li>* on page 27, avoid conflating HRM and HRD and stick with HRD.</li> </ul>	<p>Thank you for these comments. This is much appreciated!</p> <p>We have now made the all corrections as suggested you have suggested. They are follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We have improved the finding section of the abstract section which has been highlighted in yellow/red.</li> <li>- Yellow part of page 2 has been improved.</li> <li>- On page 6, we have now avoided using 'But' at the start of the sentence.</li> <li>- On pages 11 and 12, we have now maintained consistency in the use of 'competencies' .</li> <li>- On page 27, we have avoided using HRM and stuck with HRD throughout.</li> </ul>

**Reviewer #3 –Editor**

<b>COMMENT NO.</b>	<b>REVIEW TEAM COMMENTS</b>	<b>AUTHORIAL RESPONSES TO COMMENTS</b>
R3 (1)	<p>The reviewer(s) have recommended publication, but also suggest some minor revisions to your manuscript. Therefore, I invite you to respond to the reviewer(s)' comments and revise your manuscript.</p> <p>As you will see the reviewers' are now happy to accept your paper, though reviewer 2 does highlight some minor corrections that you will need to address.</p> <p>Beyond these points could I also ask you to give your paper a good copy edit and submit a clean copy as I will be happy to accept the next submitted version.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. We have now addressed all comments from the reviewers.</p> <p>We have also sent the manuscript for professional proof-reading and having gone through copy editing, we believe the current manuscript is a clean copy.</p> <p>Thank you again for your help.</p>

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