

# The Efficacy of Talent Selection Approaches on the Competitiveness among Five Star Hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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## Abstract

Talent selection is a process of picking individuals with requisite competencies to fill jobs in the organization. Reports by the government of Kenya reveal that there is limited talent, misidentification and mismatch of talent that has caused shortage of individuals with unique knowledge, skills, and abilities which create exceptional and diverse high-quality products/services that can differentially impact the competitiveness of the hospitality sector. Therefore, this study sought to find out whether talent selection approaches have an influence in obtaining individuals that create value for the hospitality sector in Kenya. The study's objective was to examine the talent selection approaches adopted in promoting competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The corresponding null hypothesis was ( $H_0$ ); there are no significant talent selections approaches adopted that promote competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County. The review of literature narrowed talent selection approaches to; selection from talent pools, selection based on performance appraisals results, poaching proven talent from other firms, interviewing, reference approach, and psychometrics. The study was conducted in eleven 5 star hotels in Nairobi City County. It adopted a mixed method research design. There were two levels of respondents. Level one comprised of the human resources executives (talent and training executives) whose sample was 22. Level two consisted of the line executives (food and beverage production, food and beverage service, front office, finance, and housekeeping) whose sample was 55. The response rate was over 70%. Data was obtained using both semi structured questionnaires and interviews. Data analysis was done using; descriptive statistics, content analysis and multiple linear regression analyses. Talent and training executives noted that talent selection approaches had a positive contribution towards the competitiveness of the hotels in terms of choosing talent ( $\bar{x} = 1.32$ ;  $SD = 0.750$ ). Perfor-

mance appraisals, poaching, mixed interviews, and reference techniques were widely used to fill both entry and non-entry positions. Line executives identified referrals, job auditions, interviews, employment tests, role plays, situational exercises, assessment centres, demonstration of tasks, description of task-procedures, and physical tests as ways of selecting talent. Regressing of talent selection with competitiveness, generated positive results that were not significant ( $\beta = 0.556$ ,  $t = 0.712$ ,  $p = 0.489$ ). This suggested that talent selection approaches used by five-star hotels in Nairobi City County do not succeed in selecting talent with unique KSAs that drive them into greater levels of competitiveness.

## Keywords

Talent Selection, Competitiveness, Knowledge, Skills, Abilities

## 1. Introduction

Talent selection is a component of talent management (TM). TM is the identification of key positions that have the potential to differentially impact the firm's competitive advantage and filling them with valuable individuals that have inimitable and rare knowledge to promote superior, diverse, and quality products/services; and retaining them (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Talent selection is a process of picking individuals with requisite competencies to fill jobs in the organization (Aswathappa, 2013). Tarique and Schuler (2012) argued that selecting the right talent for the right place, at the right time, for the right price is a challenge for organizations today. Therefore, Holland (2017) suggested that positions ought to be identified first, and as Collings (2014) stressed those positions should be "A" positions because they are the ones that fall in the domain of TM. This ensures that selected talent are not deployed to non-strategic roles where they will be underutilized. According to Holland (2017), strategic positions included key senior management, functional, technical, and commercial positions. These positions can either be filled by internal or external sources (Kichuk, 2017).

TM process ought to attract, select, engage, develop, and retain individuals with unique knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). However, a Government of Kenya, GoK's (2010) report on *strategic planning and economic survey*, the hospitality sector was experiencing difficulties in recruitment and retaining employees particularly where they compete with other sectors for talent. Thus, talent with critical KSAs needed to spur the competitiveness of the five-star hotels is neither obtained nor retained after being acquired. Third; *Sessional Paper No.1 of 2010 on Enhancing Sustainable Tourism in Kenya* (GoK, 2011) and *The National Tourism Strategy 2013-2018* (GoK, 2013) noted that the sector is experiencing a shortage of KSAs, inadequate development, engagement, and retention of talent. These TM challenges appear to have been unresolved according to

the [World Bank \(2018\)](#) report on *Kenya-Capturing Skills Requirements and Assessing Skills Gaps in the Modern Economy*. The report revealed that over 60% of organizations experience difficulties in finding required skills, 30% developing and retaining both talent and tacit knowledge. The report further contended there are weak product diversifications and differentiation in the Kenya's hospitality sector. These challenges indicate that talent selection in the Kenya's hospitality needs to be reviewed.

The limited talent, misidentification and mismatch of talent have caused shortage of individuals with unique KSAs that create exceptional and diverse high-quality products/services that can differentially impact the competitiveness of the five-star hotels in Nairobi City County. Therefore, this study sought to find out whether talent selection approaches have an influence in obtaining individuals that create value for the hospitality sector in Kenya. The study's objective was to examine the talent selection approaches adopted in promoting competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The corresponding null hypothesis was ( $H_0$ ); there are no significant talent selections approaches adopted that promote competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County. The review of literature narrowed talent selection approaches to; selection from talent pools, selection based on performance appraisals results, poaching proven talent from other firms, interviewing, reference approach, and psychometrics.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Selection Based on Performance Appraisals Results

Talent who are in-house can be promoted into critical positions when they become vacant. However, they ought to be subjected to performance appraisal ([Nwoye, 2017](#)). A study by [Boštjanci and Slana \(2018\)](#) supported the use of performance appraisal by organizations as they can measure the effectiveness of high-potentials. Further, [Holland \(2017\)](#) stated that performance appraisal has a bearing on the selection of talent with a trifecta of competence, commitment, and contribution to the strategic objectives of the organization. [Nwoye \(2017\)](#) posited that performance appraisal identifies talent who has a strategic fit for positions that are consequential to the organization. [Lyria \(2014\)](#) also noted that performance appraisal is effective as it provides an objective assessment of current individuals. Therefore, those individuals will be fit to be selected for vacancies that may arise.

### 2.2. Hotels Poach Individuals with Rare and Unique Capabilities from Competitors

Hotels across the world are experiencing a shortage of talent. One of the techniques they adopted in shelving the challenge is poaching individuals with rare and unique capabilities from competitors. This has been corroborated by [Mangusho et al. \(2015\)](#) who noted that organizations around the world are compet-

ing for the same pool of talent. This has resulted in some unethical practices such as poaching of talent. Organizations have lost some of their best talent to their competitors and have been left to either train or attract others.

A further contribution to the poaching of talent was made by Peshave and Gujarathi (2015) who observed that there has been a remarkable growth in the hotel industry in India. This situation has led to fierce competition in attracting employees leading to poaching between hotels. This makes it relatively easier for employees to switch employers leading to increased staff turnover. Msengeti and Obwogi (2015) also observed that the hotel industry in Kenya is expanding. Managements of most of these establishments are increasingly facing the challenge of staff turnover with new entrants in the industry constantly poaching employees from existing hotels.

### 2.3. Selection into Critical Positions Is from an Established Internal Talent Pools

Talent pool refers to the group of high potential and high performing incumbents that an organization can draw upon to fill pivotal talent positions (Scullion & Collings, 2011). Feng (2016) wrote that talent pool ensures continuity of operations when a critical position is vacated by immediately supplying talent who fits with the demands of the job. It guarantees that the value of the position is not lost or deferred and this safeguards the competitive advantage of organizations. Kaewsang-on (2017)'s revealed that talent is selected out of an established talent pool, and the benefit is that they have a good background understanding of the organization's direction. This implies that there will be no gap in the organization culture, and that merits a competitive advantage. Additionally, Kichuk (2017)'s work revealed that talent pools harboured talent with leadership, unique skills, knowledge, experiences, and capabilities whose selections to pivotal roles brought immediate positive outcomes.

### 2.4. Mixed Interviews (Structured and Unstructured)

Interviewing is a process conducted to eliminate unqualified applicants, and reject misfits (Aswathappa, 2013). Structured, unstructured, mixed, and behavioural interview types are adopted in the selection of talent Aswathappa (2013); Pulakos (2005). Structured interviews consist of a specific set of questions that are designed to assess critical knowledge, skills, and abilities that are required to perform the job effectively (Pulakos, 2005). An important characteristic of an effective structured interview is that it provides standardized rating criteria to help interviewers judge the quality and effectiveness of the responses provided by the interviewees. Unstructured is one in which questions to be asked are left up to the interviewer to decide, and there are no agreed-upon standards for evaluating an applicant's performance during the interview (Pulakos, 2005). Research has shown that unstructured interviews are not particularly useful for predicting job performance. Secondly, they may overlook key areas of the applicant's skills or background (Aswathappa, 2013).

A mixed interview is a blend of structured and unstructured questions used by interviewers (Aswathappa, 2013). The structured questions provide a base of information that allows comparisons between candidates. But, the unstructured questions make the interview more conventional and permits greater insights into the unique differences between applicants. Behavioural interviewing focuses on a problem or hypothetical situation that the applicant is expected to solve. This interview technique has a limited scope in which the applicant's ability to solve the types of the problem presented is revealed. The validity is more likely if the hypothetical situations match those found in the jobs. When the job involves much stress, a stress interview attempts to learn how an applicant will respond to the pressure (Aswathappa, 2013). The current study adopted a mixed interview because it assesses a range of aspects of prospective talent.

## 2.5. Psychometrics

Psychometrics is a series of standardized tasks that enable recruiters to measure individuals' personalities or abilities (Roberts, 1997). Thus, they are classified as ability and personality tests. Ability tests are designed to stimulate work requirements so that a consistent sample of work required to be undertaken by a range of candidates and their relative performance can be measured. Personality tests aim to gauge the innate traits and characteristics of people, codify them, and compare them with others (Roberts, 1997). Therefore, psychometric testing is a way to ensure that a candidate has the knowledge, skills, and aptitude for the job (Andrews, 2009).

There are various ways to test potential talent and include; technical skills tests/work sample tests, job knowledge tests, cognitive tests, achievement tests, biographical information, situational judgment tests, integrity tests, group discussions, extempore speaking, aptitude tests, physical aptitude tests, case studies, psychological tests, assessment centres, and medical tests (Andrews, 2009). The current study adopted technical skills tests/work sample tests, employment tests, and assessment centres because they are comprehensive in assessing talent who will be working in a technical and complex hospitality environment.

### 2.5.1. Technical Skills Tests/Work Sample Tests

These evaluate skills; for example, a chef may be asked to prepare a four-course menu, a server to lay out a table cover, and a room service order taker to do a voice test (Andrews, 2009). Work sample tests consist of tasks or work activities that mirror the tasks that talent is required to perform on the job (Pulakos, 2005). They can be designed to measure almost any job task but are typically designed to measure technically-oriented tasks; such as operating equipment, repairing and troubleshooting equipment, organizing and planning work, and so forth. Work sample tests typically involve having job applicants perform the tasks of interest while their performance is observed and scored by trained evaluators. Similar to job knowledge tests, work sample tests should only be used in situations where candidates are expected to know how to perform the tested job

tasks before job entry. If training on how to perform the job will be provided after selection, work sample assessments would not be appropriate to use (Pulakos, 2005).

### 2.5.2. Employment Tests

Talent management requires employment tests to be conducted on the identified personnel. Employment tests are systematic procedures for examining candidates and drawing methodical inferences, based on objective criteria, about their suitability for employment (O'Meara, 2013). When used properly, tests are a reliable and valid method of the selection and hiring process compared to commonly used approaches such as interviews, biodata, or reference checks (Chon, 2013). Tests may be used to determine how well an individual can perform tasks related to the job (ability tests), predict how capable a candidate is in learning new skills (aptitude tests), and assess how motivated a candidate will be to get along with co-workers (personality tests) (Kwansa & Parsa, 2002). This would enable the organization to select potentials that can generate high-quality products/services for competitive advantage (Aswathappa, 2013; Boella & Turner, 2013).

### 2.5.3. Assessment Centres

An assessment centre is a type of work sample test that is typically focused on assessing higher-level executive and supervisory competencies (Pulakos, 2005). They measure knowledge, skills, and attitudes through a series of exercises that reflect job content and types of problems faced on the job, cognitive ability tests, personality inventories, and/or job knowledge tests (Andrews, 2009). Candidates are asked to complete a series of exercises that simulate actual situations, problems, and tasks that they would face on the job for which they are being considered, and they are asked to handle these as if they were in the real situation. Assessment centres usually last at least a day and up to several days (Pulakos, 2005).

Assessment centres typically include role-play exercises, in-basket exercises, analytical exercises, and group discussion exercises (Pulakos, 2005). In-basket exercises are where a candidate responds to phone messages, e-mails, memoranda, reports, and other items that require action to be taken. Sometimes in-basket exercises also include an interview with trained assessors where the candidate explains the rationale for his or her actions. Trained assessors observe the performance of candidates during the assessment process and evaluate them on standardized rating. Some assessment centres also include other types of assessment methods, such as cognitive ability, job knowledge, and personality tests. It should be noted that assessment centres are not only used for selection purposes but can also be used to provide comprehensive development feedback to participants (Pulakos, 2005).

## 2.6. Reference Approach

A reference approach is facilitated by certain people who have experience in a

specific field and when a vacancy arises they use their judgment to suggest replacements (Tzoumas, 2013). Kaewsaeng-on (2017) suggested that referrals by other employees or friends already working in the organization contribute to talent selection. Their uptake should be based on criteria such as person-job fit, person-organization fit, person-workgroup fit, and person-industry fit. Study findings by Mehta (2017) revealed that employees in the service sector at Punjab and Haryana India were encouraged to provide references of talented candidates. However, the reference approach fails to provide an impartial measure of evaluation and also is considered less trustworthy for companies to hire the right persons (Saad & Mayouf, 2018). Tzoumas (2013) also backed this observation by noting that referrals can; later on, prove to be ineffective.

## 2.7. Summary of the Gaps from the Literature Reviewed

All the TM studies reviewed described a handful of talent selection approaches. This study assembled some approaches from human resources textbooks and investigated them further in the five-star hotels in Nairobi to establish their impact on competitiveness. The studies conducted in hospitality included; Tzoumas (2013); Msengeti and Obwogi (2015); Peshave and Gujarathi (2015); Kaewsaeng-on (2017); Kichuk (2017) but they used qualitative research design which did not give a clear picture of talent selection in the industry. This study filled the gap in the literature by conducting a survey through a quantitative research design that revealed the statistics on talent selection. Finally, studies of TM addressing talent selection in Kenya's hospitality industry were not available; thus this study sought to fill the gap.

## 3. Methodology

The study was conducted in eleven 5 star hotels in Nairobi City County that were listed in the Tourism Regulatory Authority of Kenya website. It adopted a mixed method research design. There were two levels of respondents that were obtained based on a complete enumeration (census) method. Level one comprised of the human resources executives (talent and training executives) whose sample was 22. The response rate achieved was 100%, and their responses were quantitative obtained through semi-structured questionnaires. Level two consisted of the line executives (food and beverage production, food and beverage service, front office, finance, and housekeeping) whose sample was 55. The response rate was 35 translating to 64%, and their responses were qualitative obtained using semi-structured interviews. The response rates are in accordance with Johnson and Wislar (2012) who asserted that a response of above 60% is generally accepted as a threshold for survey quality in social sciences. Pre-testing of the research instruments was carried out in two, 5 (five) star-rated hotels which eventually did not participate in the study. Items that posted a Cronbach's coefficient Alphas of less than 0.6 were dropped. Data analysis was done using; descriptive statistics, content analysis and multiple linear regression analyses.



## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Demographic Profile of the Participants

The demographic profile of participants comprised of gender, age, period respondents has held their positions and their academic qualifications.

#### 4.1.1. Gender

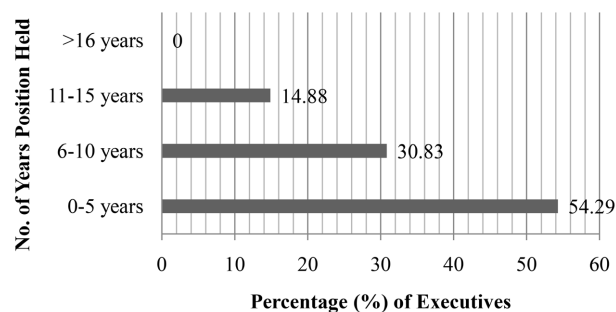
Results revealed that the overall male participants were 55.86% (n = 81), while the female was 44.14% (n = 64). Male respondents dominated in all other categories except housekeeping executives. **Table 1** exhibits the results of the participants' gender profile.

#### 4.1.2. Age

Generally, the age of the majority of respondents was between 46 - 50 years (n = 42, 47.73%), followed by ≥51 years (n = 38, 43.18%) and the least was between 31 - 35 years (n = 17, 19.32%). **Table 2** illustrates the results of the participants' age.

#### 4.1.3. The Period Respondents Have Held Their Positions

First, the period respondents have held their positions was determined in each hotel department. Secondly, the total percentage of respondents per cluster was calculated as shown in **Figure 1**.



**Figure 1.** Respondents have held their positions. Source: Omoke, 2022.

**Table 1.** Participants' gender profile.

Level of Respondents	Female		Male	
	n	%	n	%
Talent and training executives	08	36.40	14	63.60
Food and beverage production executives	02	28.57	05	71.43
Food and beverage service executives	03	42.86	04	57.14
Front office executives	02	25.00	06	75.00
Finance executives	02	33.33	04	66.67
Housekeeping executive executives	06	85.71	01	14.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>41.98</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>58.02</b>

Source: Omoke, 2022.



**Table 2.** Distribution of the participants' age.

Respondents	≤30	31 - 35	36 - 40	40 - 45	46 - 50	≥51
Talent & training executives	0 (0%)	2 (9.1%)	5 (22.7%)	7 (31.8%)	6 (27.3%)	2 (9.1%)
Food & beverage production executives	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (14.29%)	2 (9.1%)	1 (14.29%)	3 (42.86%)
Food & beverage service executives	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (9.1%)	1 (14.29%)	2 (9.1%)	2 (9.1%)
Front office executives	0 (0%)	1 (14.29%)	2 (9.1%)	2 (9.1%)	1 (14.29%)	2 (9.1%)
Finance executives	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (9.1%)	3 (42.86%)	1 (14.29%)
Housekeeping executives	0 (0%)	2 (9.1%)	1 (14.29%)	3 (42.86%)	1 (14.29%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>0 (0%)</b>	<b>5 (8.77%)</b>	<b>11 (19.30%)</b>	<b>17 (29.82%)</b>	<b>14 (24.56%)</b>	<b>10 (17.54%)</b>

Source: Omoke, 2022.

#### 4.1.4. The Respondents' Professional Qualifications

Professional qualifications of the respondents were sought and the majority of the respondents had a Bachelor's Degree ( $n = 87$ , 60%). It was followed by respondents with a Master's Degree ( $n = 34$ , 23.49%), then Diploma at ( $n = 21$ , 14.48%). It is only 2.07% ( $n = 3$ ) who had doctorate qualifications. **Table 3** shows the distribution of the respondents' professional qualifications.

## 4.2. Quantitative Analysis

Talent and training executives were asked to indicate talent selection approaches which they considered applicable in their respective hotels. The findings are revealed in **Table 4**. Interviews were answered by line managers.

## 4.3. Inferential Statistics Analysis

Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) posited that; there are no significant talent selections approaches adopted that promote competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County. Linear regression was conducted, and the regression model summary is presented in **Table 5**.

Results in **Table 5** revealed that the regression model correlation coefficient  $R$  was (0.817) indicating that there was a significant relationship between the predictor variables and the dependent variable. Moreover, results showed a significant overall regression model coefficient of determination of  $R^2 = 0.817$ , indicating that approximately 81.7% of the variance in competitiveness (quality of products/services) of five-star hotels could be explained by the model significant predictor variables. Moreover, this finding is emphasised by ANOVA<sup>a</sup> in **Table 6**.

**Table 3.** Respondents' professional qualifications.

Respondents	Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	PhD
Talent & training executives	0 (0%)	13 (59.1%)	9 (40.9%)	0 (0%)
Food & beverage production executives	2 (28.57%)	3 (42.86%)	2 (28.57%)	0 (0%)
Food & beverage service executives	3 (42.86%)	4 (57.14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Front office executives	3 (37.5%)	4 (50%)	1 (12.5%)	0 (0%)
Finance executives	0 (0%)	6 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Housekeeping executives	4 (57.14%)	3 (42.86%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 (21.05%)</b>	<b>33 (57.89%)</b>	<b>12 (21.05%)</b>	<b>0 (0%)</b>

Source: Omoke, 2022.

**Table 4.** Descriptive analysis.

Factor	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	SD
Selection of talent to critical positions is based on performance appraisals results ( $x_1$ )	18 (81.8%)	4 (18.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.18	0.395
Hotels poach individuals with rare and unique capabilities from competitors ( $x_2$ )	14 (63.6%)	8 (36.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.36	0.492
Selection into critical positions is from an established internal talent pools ( $x_3$ )	4 (18.2%)	5 (22.7%)	9 (40.9%)	3 (13.6%)	1 (4.5%)	2.64	1.093
Mixed interviews (structured and unstructured) lead to the selection of talent ( $x_4$ )	6 (27.3%)	8 (36.4%)	6 (27.3%)	2 (9.1%)	0 (0%)	2.18	0.958
Technical skills tests/work sample tests allow for the selection of talent ( $x_5$ )	4 (18.2%)	7 (31.8%)	7 (31.8%)	4 (18.2%)	0 (0%)	2.50	1.012
Employment tests allow for the selection of talent ( $x_6$ )	9 (40.9%)	4 (18.2%)	5 (22.7%)	4 (18.2%)	0 (0%)	2.18	1.181
Assessment centres to allow for the selection of talent ( $x_7$ )	7 (31.8%)	2 (9.1%)	6 (27.3%)	6 (27.3%)	1 (4.5%)	2.64	1.329
Reference approach is used because it yields talent ( $x_8$ )	14 (63.6%)	4 (18.2%)	0 (0%)	4 (18.2%)	0 (0%)	1.91	1.269
Competiveness (the selection process succeeds in choosing talent individuals)	5 (22.7%)	10 (45.5%)	7 (31.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.32	0.750

Notes: n = 22. A five-point Likert scale was used with 1 indicating "Strongly Agree" and 5 "Strongly Disagree". Source: Omoke, 2022.

**Table 5.** Regression analysis model summary.

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		df1	df2	Sig. F Change
				R Square Change	F Change			
0.817a	0.668	0.464	0.582	0.668	3.270	08	13	0.028

a Predictors: (Constant),  $x_1$ ,  $x_2$ ,  $x_3$ ,  $x_4$ ,  $x_5$ ,  $x_6$ ,  $x_7$ , and  $x_8$ . Source: Omoke, 2022.

**Table 6.** ANOVA<sup>a</sup> model.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8.867	08	1.108	3.270	0.028b
Residual	4.406	13	0.339		
Total	13.273	21			

a Dependent Variable: Competiveness (the selection process succeeds in choosing talented individuals). b Predictors: (Constant),  $x_1$ ,  $x_2$ ,  $x_3$ ,  $x_4$ ,  $x_5$ ,  $x_6$ ,  $x_7$ , and  $x_8$ . Source: Omoke, 2022.

The ANOVA<sup>a</sup> establishes whether the regression model explains a statistically significant part of the variance. It utilizes a ratio to compare the extent to which the linear regression model predicts the outcome. It predicts that the association between the means of the dependent variable and the predictors (independent variables) is statistically significant ( $p = 0.028 < 0.050$ ). The overall regression model was significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) as demonstrated in **Table 7**.

**Table 7** yielded the values of the coefficients to be estimated and their corresponding significance values ( $p$ -values). The  $p$ -values were used to test the hypothesis about  $\beta$ , the coefficients. In this test, the decision was to reject the null hypothesis whenever the  $p$ -values were less than 0.05.

#### 4.4. Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative results were obtained from the interviews conducted on the line executives. The results are displayed in **Table 8**.

### 5. Discussion

#### 5.1. Demographic Profile of the Participants

**Table 1** shows the participants' gender profile. The findings were close to those of Knott (2016) whose results indicated that 55% of the respondents were male and 45% of the respondents were female (Knott, 2016). Dumse (2011)'s findings were consistent with the gender split that is a reflection of male dominance in organizations surveyed. A two-sample proportion test (at 95% confidence level) was done to test if the proportion of male to female respondents were significantly different, yielding a resulting Z-value of 1.96 and a  $p$ -value of  $<0.001$ . Thus male respondents in this study were significantly higher than the female respondents ( $p < 0.001$ ). This finding would imply that any talent selection programme that is implemented would have to recognize this aspect of the gender profile. According to Dumse (2011), critical in going forward is a deliberate effort to increase the number of female employees especially in the core and critical positions.

**Table 2** illustrated the results of the participants' age. The analysis of the age of the management staff revealed that the majority age of the executives was between 40 - 45 years old, ( $n = 17$ , 29.82%) followed by 46 - 50 years old ( $n = 14$ , 24.56%). These findings hold resonance with a study conducted in five-star hotels

**Table 7.** Regression coefficients<sup>a</sup>.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	$\beta$	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.556	0.781		0.712	0.489
Selection of talent to critical positions is based on performance appraisals results ( $x_1$ )	0.074	0.387	0.037	0.190	0.852
Hotels poach individuals with rare and unique capabilities from competitors ( $x_2$ )	-0.214	0.308	-0.132	-0.693	0.500
Selection into critical positions is from an established internal talent pools ( $x_3$ )	0.391	0.146	0.538	2.679	<b>0.019*</b>
Mixed interviews (structured and unstructured) lead to the selection of talent ( $x_4$ )	-0.127	0.169	-0.153	-0.754	0.464
Technical skills tests/work sample tests allow for the selection of talent ( $x_5$ )	0.340	0.168	0.432	2.016	0.065
Employment tests allow for the selection of talent ( $x_6$ )	0.019	0.133	0.032	0.667	0.516
Assessment centres to allow for the selection of talent ( $x_7$ )	0.114	0.171	0.169	0.143	0.888
Reference approach is used because it yields talent ( $x_8$ )	-0.228	0.128	-0.364	-1.784	0.098

a Dependent Variable: Competiveness (the selection process succeeds in choosing talented individuals). \* $p < 0.05$ . Source: Omoke, 2022.

**Table 8.** Interview results.

NO.	RESPONDENT	RESPONSE
1	FBPE2 (Food and Beverage Production Executive 2)	In some occasions, we use referrals to fill critical positions
2	FBPE3 (Food and Beverage Production Executive 3)	When we want to fill entry level positions, we use job auditions
3	HEE5 (Housekeeping Executive 5)	Like you would be aware, interviews are the most important in filling various positions in the organizations
4	HEE6 (Housekeeping Executive 6)	The hotel conducts employment tests to fill practical related positions
5	FBPE4 (Food and Beverage Production Executive 4)	From my experience, role plays have been effective in recruiting front line staff

## Continued

6	FBPE6 (Food and Beverage Production Executive 6)	We occasionally use situational exercises in selecting staff for promotion
7	FBPE7 (Food and Beverage Production Executive 1)	We usually have positions that require serious intellectual involvement and this is where we use assessment centres
8	FBSE3 (Food and Beverage Service Executive 3)	As you know, the nature of the hospitality jobs is hands on and therefore, we employ demonstration of tasks to fill them
9	FBSE4 (Food and Beverage Service Executive 4)	For us to employ someone, we give them a list of tasks and ask them to describe their procedures
10	FBPE2 (Food and Beverage Production Executive 2)	At time the hotel uses physical tests in recruiting individuals that can withstand jobs that have labour intensive demands

Source: Omoke, 2022.

in Nairobi by Mbugi (2015) which suggested that; the higher the age of executives, the better their performance in management. The findings of this study imply that management staffers relatively had a sufficient period of work experience. Such experience deepens their knowledge, intellectual capital, technical knowledge, and skills in their respective responsibilities of work. Therefore, they are in a position to identify, select, and deploy talented individuals who bring about competitive advantage for their hotels.

The period the respondents have held their positions in the hospitality industry is important in the selection of talent of talented workforce. Figure 1 showed that 54.29% of the respondents had worked in their respective hotels for less than 5 years, between 6 - 10 years were 30.83%, 11 - 15 years were 12.82% and above 16 years there was none. It can therefore be established that the majority of the respondents (54.29%) had held their current positions in five-star hotels in Nairobi for less than 5 years. These findings are consistent with those of Knott (2016) whose results showed that the majority (71%) of the executives of the organizations surveyed had held their current positions for less than 5 years. 20% of the respondents had worked for 6 to 8 years, while those who had worked for more than 9 years were 9%.

There are two views as regards the majority of executives holding their positions for a less significant period. The first view is that this is caused by high turnover levels in hotels (Kuriam et al., 2011). The studies by Hei and Rahim (2011); GoK (2010)'s *strategic planning and economic survey* supported the perspective that the hospitality industry has always had challenges of losing highly skilled personnel to other industries and competitors. The implication is that the loss of these talented individuals has a domino effect on the identification and selection of high potentials (HiPo), high performers (HiPe), or talent with unique KSAs to power them to greater levels of competitiveness. The second

view is that knowledge workers are developed over a long time in specific contexts of customized tacit knowledge of a particular organization. This can impact the selection and development of new talent. There has to be an effort to retain executives over a long time so that hotels continue to utilize vast insights into the business and hotels due to their long experiences. This assertion is in line with Gichuki (2014) which noted that experienced knowledge workers are sources of immense experiences, insights, understanding, and capabilities to give organizations a competitive edge.

Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents' professional qualifications. The majority of the respondents had a Bachelor's Degree ( $n = 33$ , 57.89%), followed by respondents with a Master's Degree ( $n = 12$ , 21.05%), then Diploma at ( $n = 12$ , 21.05%). This implies that the majority of the management staff possesses higher academic qualifications. These qualifications can be sources of intellectual capital, technical knowledge, skills, and values. Therefore, they are in a position to identify, select, deploy, and engage talented individuals who bring about competitive advantage in the hotels. The results are related to those in a study by Mbugi (2015) which found that higher professional qualifications of the executives directly influenced the performance of hotels which brings about competitive advantage.

## 5.2. Talent Selection Approaches on the Competitiveness among Five Star Hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya

### 5.2.1. Selection Based on Performance Appraisals Results

Results in Table 4 revealed that the selection of talent to critical positions is based on performance appraisals results ( $\bar{x} = 1.180$ ;  $SD = 0.395$ ). The majority (81.8%) of talent and training executives strongly agreed and 18.2% agreed with the statement. This showed that performance appraisals results were overwhelmingly relied on for selecting talent in five-star hotels in Nairobi City County. The mean (1.180) implies that research informants leaned towards a strong agreement. The SD was 0.395, indicating a normal variation in the responses. The results imply that five-star hotels in Nairobi City County can fill critical positions that differentially influence their competitive advantage.

The findings concurred with suggestions by Nwoye (2017); Boštjanci and Slana (2018) who supported the use of performance appraisal by organizations as they can measure the effectiveness of high-potentials thus their selection differentially impact organizations. The results also reflected the accord by Holland (2017) who stated that performance appraisal has a bearing on the selection of talent with a trifecta of competence, commitment, and contribution to strategic objectives of the organization. Lyria (2014) also noted that performance appraisal was effective as it provides an objective assessment of current individuals whose engagement influences firms' competitiveness.

The coefficients of selection of talent to critical positions based on performance appraisals results in Table 7 did not yield a significant relationship with the competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya ( $\beta =$

0.074,  $p = 0.852$ ). Therefore; the  $H_0$ ; there are no significant talent selections approaches adopted that promote competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County was accepted. These findings infer that; the performance appraisals are not utilised, and if they are; the utilisation levels are low. Another deduction is that the appraisals used may be lacking integrated frameworks, which assess both soft and hard competencies. The result can also suggest that the individuals ranked as top talent are not equipped with the critical knowledge, skills, and abilities capable of generating unique products or services. Therefore; their efforts are not sufficient in creating a competitive advantage

### 5.2.2. Hotels Poach Individuals with Rare and Unique Capabilities from Competitors

Talent and training executives also strongly agreed that hotels poach individuals with rare and unique capabilities from competitors ( $\bar{x} = 1.36$ ;  $SD = 0.492$ ). The majority (63.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 36.4% agreed with the statement. This suggested that poaching of talent by the five star hotels in Nairobi City County is a common practice. The mean (1.36) implies that research informants leaned towards a strong agreement. The standard deviation was 0.492, indicating a normal variation in the responses. The findings infer that five-star hotels in Nairobi City County poach individuals with rare and unique capabilities from competitors to enhance their competitive edge.

The results agreed with the portrayal by Mangusho et al. (2015) who noted that organizations around the world are poaching talent. They, however, labelled this practice unethical. The results also align with Peshave and Gujarathi (2015) who observed that there has been a remarkable growth of the hotel industry in India necessitating a range of means to acquire talent including poaching of talent between hotels. The findings matched those of Msengeti and Obwogi (2015) as who wrote that the hotel industry in Kenya is expanding with new entrants constantly poaching talent from existing hotels.

The coefficients of the hotels poaching individuals with rare and unique capabilities from competitors did not yield a significant relationship with the competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya ( $\beta = -0.214$ ,  $p = 0.500$ ). Therefore; the  $H_0$ ; there are no significant talent selections approaches adopted that promote competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County was accepted. The implication is that the poached talent does not find an environment to thrive in. Another important interpretation is that the talent thought to have rare and unique capabilities from competitors do not actually have them. These individuals might have thrived in their previous work stations because the firm has unique resources that are difficult to transfer.

### 5.2.3. Selection into Critical Positions Is from an Established Internal Talent Pools

Talent and training executives inclined towards uncertainty on whether “selection into critical positions is from established internal talent pools ( $\bar{x} = 2.64$ ;  $SD = 1.093$ )”. Among the respondents; 18.2% strongly agreed, 22.7% agreed, and



40.9% uncertain with the statement. This signifies that the five-star hotels in Nairobi City County have yet to establish sufficient talent pools for developing talent for critical positions. This is confirmed by the mean (2.64) which implied that respondents leaned towards uncertainty. The standard deviation was 1.093, indicating a substantial divergence of participants' responses. The results imply that five-star hotels in Nairobi City County are not keen on inducting talent into talent pools. This means that these hotels are missing the benefits of talent who have been developed further to fill critical positions.

The current study finding somewhat differed with the assertion by [Feng \(2016\)](#) who wrote that talent pools ensure continuity of operations when a critical position is vacated by immediately supplying talent who fits with the demands of the job. The findings again somewhat differed with [Kaewsaeng-on \(2017\)](#)'s revelation that talent in hotels selected from established talent pools has a good background understanding of the organization's direction. This implies that there will be no gap in the organization culture, and that merits a competitive advantage. It also appeared that five-star hotels in Nairobi Country did not match with organizations depicted in [Kichuk \(2017\)](#)'s work whose talent pools represented talent with leadership, unique skills, knowledge, experiences, and capabilities that brought immediate positive outcomes.

The coefficients of the selection of individuals into critical positions being from an established internal talent pools coefficients were positive. Therefore; the  $H_0$ ; there are no significant talent selections approaches adopted that promote competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County was rejected. This implied that they were positively related to competitiveness ( $\beta = 0.391$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ). This indicated that with an increase in each unit of the coefficient, there was an equivalent increase in the competitiveness.

#### 5.2.4. Mixed Interviews (Structured and Unstructured)

Talent and training executives agreed that "mixed interviews (structured and unstructured) lead to the selection of talent ( $\bar{x} = 2.18$ ;  $SD = 0.958$ )". Among the study respondents, 27.3% strongly agreed, 36.4% agreed, and 27.3% uncertain with the statement. It is an indication that five-star hotels in Nairobi City County had a good measure of reliance on mixed interviews in selecting talent. The mean (2.18) implies that research informants leaned towards an agreement. The standard deviation was 0.958, indicating a normal variation in the respondents' responses. The results imply that five-star hotels in Nairobi City County use mixed interviews as one way of selecting talent. As a result, they can select high-potential individuals with sought competencies, personality, and fit for the hotel.

The results of [Gitonga \(2016\)](#) were in agreement ( $\bar{x} = 4.0000$ ;  $SD = 0.91735$ ) that; organizations select talent through interviews. The researcher used a Likert scale in which; 5 = very high extent; 4 = good extent; 3 = fair extent; 2 = slight extent; and 1 = none at all. [Pulakos \(2005\)](#) noted that these interviews consisted of carefully planned, job-related questions that are systematically scored to relia-

bly identify talent. The results also echo Aswathappa (2013)'s work that advocates for use of different interview approach including mixed ones.

The coefficients of the talent selected through mixed interviews (structured and unstructured) did not have a significant relationship with the competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya ( $\beta = -0.127$ ,  $p = 0.464$ ). Therefore, the  $H_0$ ; there are no significant talent selections approaches adopted that promote competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County was accepted.

### 5.2.5. Psychometrics

Talent and training executives leaned to a neutral stance that, "technical skills/work sample tests allow for the selection of talent ( $\bar{x} = 2.50$ ;  $SD = 1.012$ )". Among the respondents; 18.2% strongly agreed, 31.8% agreed, and 31.8% uncertain with the statement. This denotes that the star hotel in Nairobi City County's utilization of technical skills/work sample tests to select talent is just a little above average. This is confirmed by the mean (2.50) which implied that respondents leaned towards uncertainty. The standard deviation was 1.012, indicating a substantial divergence of responses. The findings suggested that, the extent to which five-star hotels in Nairobi City County utilize technical skills/work sample tests need to be embraced more in selecting HiPo, HiPe, or talent with unique KSAs to power them to greater levels of competitiveness.

These findings slightly differed with the portrayal by Pulakos (2005); Andrews (2009) who rooted for technical/work sample tests for selecting talent that bring competitive advantage for organizations. They posited that technical/work sample tests subject prospective talent to perform the tasks while their performance is observed and scored by trained evaluators, which eventually guide them in choosing the right candidates.

Talent and training executives agreed that "employment tests allow for the selection of talent ( $\bar{x} = 2.18$ ;  $SD = 1.181$ )". Most respondents; 40.9% strongly agreed, and 22.7% uncertain with the statement. It is an indication that five-star hotels in Nairobi City County embraced employment tests to select talent for critical positions. The mean (2.18) suggests that research informants agreed with the statement. The aggregate standard deviation, a measure of the dispersion of a set of data from its mean, was 1.181, indicating a substantial divergence of participants' responses. This implies that other significant views utilized other forms of interviews to obtain talent for critical positions. But overall, the results imply that employment tests were critical in selecting talent whose engagement may have made the hotels competitive. It means that talent executives can predict the ability of the candidate, measure job knowledge, and determine their intellectual abilities and organizational fit.

The findings agreed with those by Chon (2013) which showed that various employment tests led to the selection of talent with skills, intelligence, and technical knowledge to do the job. This would enable the organization to select potentials that can generate high-quality products/services for competitive advan-

tage. The results also mirrored ideas by [Aswathappa \(2013\)](#); [Boella and Turner \(2013\)](#); [O'Meara \(2013\)](#) which insisted that employment tests conducted on the identified personnel results on qualified talent for the vacated critical positions.

Talent and training executives inclined towards uncertainty on whether “assessment centres allow for the selection of talent ( $\bar{x} = 2.64$ ;  $SD = 1.329$ )”. Among the respondents; 31.8% strongly agreed, 27.3% uncertain, and 27.3% disagreed with the statement. This indicated that five-star hotels in Nairobi City County's utilization of assessment centres to select talent are just a little above average. This is confirmed by the mean (2.64) which implied that respondents leaned towards uncertainty. The standard deviation was 1.329, indicating a substantial divergence of participants' responses. The results suggest that five-star hotels in Nairobi City County have fairly embraced assessment centres. This means that they do not fully determine the holistic competencies of their prospective talent. Additionally, rigorous talent assessment centre processes such as experiential exercises, group decision-making tasks, case study analysis, and employment tests role-playing exercises among others are moderately used.

These findings slightly differed with the portrayal by [Pulakos \(2005\)](#); [Andrews \(2009\)](#) who rooted for assessment centres for selecting talent that bring competitive advantage for organizations. They suggested that assessment centres use rigorous activities that expose maximum capacities including cognitive ability, job knowledge, and personal characteristics of talent. Thus candidates selected to target critical positions have what it takes to differentially impact the competitive advantage of their organizations.

The subjection of the psychometrics (technical skills tests/work sample tests, employment tests, and assessment centres) to linear regression analysis did not yield a significant relationship against the competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The use of technical skills tests/work sample tests for the selection of talent did not have a significant relationship with the competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya ( $\beta = 0.340$ ,  $p = 0.065$ ). The use of employment tests for the selection of talent did not have a significant relationship with the competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya ( $\beta = 0.019$ ,  $p = 0.516$ ). The use of the assessment centres for the selection of talent did not have a significant relationship with the competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya ( $\beta = 0.114$ ,  $p = 0.888$ ). Therefore; the  $H_0$ ; there are no significant psychometrics adopted that promote competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County was accepted.

### 5.2.6. Reference Approach

Talent and training executives leaned to agreeing that, reference approach is used because it yields talent ( $\bar{x} = 1.91$ ;  $SD = 1.269$ ). Among these respondents, 63.6% strongly agreed and 18.2% agreed. This suggests that five-star hotels in Nairobi City County utilized the reference approach to select talent to a large extent. The mean (1.91) implies that research informants leaned towards agree-

ment rather than strong agreement. The SD was 1.269, indicating a substantial divergence of participants' responses. The findings imply that five-star hotels have embraced the reference approach to obtain talent for critical positions. The results suggest that these hotels utilize reference approaches to select talent that fits well with hotels' organizational culture hence sustaining their competitiveness.

These findings conformed to those of research by D'Alessandro (2018) whose participants mentioned referrals as an occasional but important selection strategy. They further noted that some of their best talent has come from referrals. Study findings by Mehta (2017) also agreed with the current study and observed that staff in the service sector at Punjab and Haryana India was encouraged to provide references for talent. Kaewsaeng-on (2017)'s study suggested that referrals by other employees or friends already working in target organizations contribute to talent selection agreed with the current study. However, Tzoumas (2013); Saad and Mayouf (2018) did not support these findings because they were sceptical about whether the reference approach is effective. The coefficients of the reference approach to select talent did not have a significant relationship with the competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya ( $\beta = -0.228$ ,  $p = 0.098$ ). Therefore; the  $H_0$ ; there are no significant talent selections approaches adopted that promote competitiveness among five-star hotels in Nairobi City County was accepted.

Opinions of the talent and training executives were sought on whether talent selection approaches have a positive contribution towards the competitiveness of the hotels in terms of choosing talent. Survey respondents strongly agreed that "the selection process succeeds in choosing talent ( $\bar{x} = 1.32$ ;  $SD = 0.750$ )". This finding implied that five-star hotels in Nairobi City County have taken advantage of a range of talent selection approaches to select talent. However; the results of the regression analysis indicated that, the talent selection approaches adopted have not yielded competitive advantage for the hotels. Based on the values of the coefficients, the corresponding linear regression equation on the relationship between talent selections approaches and the competitiveness of five-star hotels was thus expressed as;

$$y = 0.556 + 0.074x_1 - 0.214x_2 + 0.391x_3 - 0.127x_4 + 0.340x_5 + 0.019x_6 + 0.114x_7 - 0.228x_8 \quad (i)$$

The  $H_0$ ; "there are no significant talent selections approaches adopted that promote competitiveness among the five-star hotels in Nairobi City County", was tested through linear regression. The results revealed positive results but they were not significant ( $\beta = 0.556$ ,  $t = 0.712$ ,  $p = 0.489$ ) thus, the hypothesis was accepted meaning that approaches adopted for the selection of talent did not yield individuals with unique KSAs.

Interview with the front office, housekeeping, food and beverage production, food and beverage service, and finance executives also revealed ways of identifying individuals with unique abilities for difficult jobs or positions in their de-

partment. Results indicated that: referrals, job auditions, interviews, employment tests, role plays, situational exercises, assessment centres, demonstration of tasks, description of task-procedures, and physical tests stood out as most important ways. Interviewee FBPE2 noted that, “*in some occasions, we use referrals to fill critical positions*”. Interviewee HEE5 stated, “*like you would be aware, interviews are the most important in filling various positions in the organizations*”. FBSE3 responded that, “*as you know, the nature of the hospitality jobs is hands on and therefore, we employ demonstration of tasks to fill them*”. FBSE4 indicated that, “*for us to employ someone, we give them a list of tasks and ask them to describe their procedures*”. FBPE2 informed the researcher that, “*at time the hotel uses physical tests in recruiting individuals that can withstand jobs that have labour intensive demands*”. The interpretation is that hotels’ departments investigated have some kind of selection approaches that identified individuals with unique abilities for difficult jobs or positions in their departments. Consequently, these individuals positively impact a competitive advantage. The findings were in congruence with those of other researchers who found out that; right talent selection approaches allow organizations to recruit talent who differentially created competitive advantage (Kichuk, 2017; D’Alessandro, 2018).

## 6. Summary

Talent and training executives noted that talent selection approaches had a positive contribution towards the competitiveness of the hotels in terms of choosing talent ( $\bar{x} = 1.32$ ;  $SD = 0.750$ ). Performance appraisals, poaching, mixed interviews, and reference techniques were widely used to fill both entry and non-entry positions. Line executives also identified referrals, job auditions, interviews, employment tests, role plays, situational exercises, assessment centres, demonstration of tasks, description of task-procedures, and physical tests as ways of selecting talent. Regressing of talent selection with competitiveness, generated positive results that were not significant ( $\beta = 0.556$ ,  $t = 0.712$ ,  $p = 0.489$ ). This suggested that talent selection approaches used by five-star hotels in Nairobi City County do not succeed in selecting HiPo, HiPe, or talent with unique KSAs that drive them into greater levels of competitiveness.

## 7. Conclusion

The review of literature revealed talent selection approaches deemed to find HiPo, HiPe, or talent with unique KSAs. A survey at five-star hotels in Nairobi City County on these approaches did not yield significant success. However; the descriptive analysis suggested that these approaches were adopted and contributed to a positive influence on the competitive advantage. The qualitative analysis which comprised of the views from the line executives indicated that the target hotels have adopted effective approaches for selecting talent. Some of them include; referrals, job auditions, interviews, employment tests, role plays, situational exercises, assessment centres, demonstration of tasks, description of task-proce-

dures, and physical tests stood out as the most important ways. The linear regression analysis revealed that talent selection approaches adopted have not influenced competitiveness among the five-star hotels in Nairobi City County. Thus, hotels should enrich the talent selection approaches that this paper targeted because they have brought competitive advantage to other organizations in the global context based on the reviewed literature. The success of these approaches can successfully select HiPo, HiPe, or talent with unique KSAs whose deployment to critical positions drive up and sustain hotels' competitiveness.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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