

**THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT IN FOSTERING  
KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOUR:  
Thai Boutique Hotels**

**NIRAMOL PROMNIL**

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## ABSTRACT

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Previous literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour highlight the role of HRM in influencing interpersonal or psychological knowledge sharing factors, and potentially establishing social capital elements for knowledge sharing. However, the majority of previous studies have been undertaken in knowledge-intensive companies and, therefore, the understanding of how HRM fosters knowledge sharing in labour-intensive companies, particularly boutique hotels, is limited. This study makes a contribution by focusing on exploring the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels.

Previous studies typically investigate a single level of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour and with data collected from only one level of organizational actors. This study argues that HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour exist within a hierarchy involving social actors at various levels of organizations, who have different perceptions and experiences of HRM fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. Therefore, undertaking a single level of investigation is inadequate to explain social construction of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations. In addition, these studies are dominated by deductive and quantitative investigations. This means they are typically unable to offer insight into how or why HRM foster knowledge sharing behaviour, which involves complicated subjective processes. In order to explore complex social phenomena and contribute to the contextual richness for understanding the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization, this study employs an inductive qualitative and multilevel approach involving the perspectives of actors at various levels in organizations. This study employs a multiple case study approach involving multiple sources of data including relevant HRM documentation, non-participant observation (in public places) and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 40 participants, working at various levels of the organizational hierarchies, from the 5 boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

This study broadens the knowledge of HRM and knowledge sharing outside of knowledge-intensive companies. It develops an empirical framework of the role of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour, which is appropriate for the SME boutique hotel sector but it may not be appropriate for organizations where the social setting is not informed by a highly collective culture. The empirical framework demonstrates the ranges of HRM practices in facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour at different-level within SME boutique hotels. Firstly, apart from high-performance HRM practices, functional flexibility in HRM practice provides employees with evidence of organizational support for them to receive personal benefits, and this encourages them to share their knowledge individually. Secondly, a soft HRM approach underpinned by the (Thai) culture plays a crucial role in establishing a sense of belonging with shared goals and vision, and this promotes departmental knowledge sharing behaviour. Lastly, a soft HRM approach combined with Face-To-Face-Communication (FTFC) facilitates knowledge sharing behaviour across entire organizations, and this may enhance the quality of service and develop competitive advantage. This study recognizes that Thai culture is a significant influential factor in managing people in SME boutique hotels which are likely to be in collectivist social settings. The Thai culture in HRM and resulting practice builds a sense of belonging with shared goals and understanding and this, in turn, encourages people to share their knowledge with each other.

The major limitation of this study is the lack of the generalizability of case study research results. The study recommends further research to use a mixed research method to conduct research across all four regions of Thailand.

## DECLARATION

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I, hereby declare that this submission is my own personal effort. I took reasonable care ensure that the work is original, and that, to the best of my knowledge and has not been taken from other sources. It contains no material previously published or written by other people, except where such work has been cited and acknowledge within the text.

Niramol Promnil

March, 2019

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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Knowledge management researchers (Bouncken and Pyo, 2002; Chen and Cheng, 2012; Kim and Lee, 2013) point out that effective knowledge management, in particular knowledge sharing, contributes to establishing competitive advantage for hotel businesses. For a decade, the majority of human resource management (HRM) researchers have been investigating the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in knowledge-intensive companies, emphasizing the role of HRM in influencing interpersonal or psychological knowledge sharing factors, and potentially establishing social capital elements for knowledge sharing. However, the understanding of how HRM fosters knowledge sharing in labour-intensive companies, particularly boutique hotels, is limited. Therefore, further research is required to explore the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in boutique hotels where unique and highly personalized services are key factors to achieving sustainable competitive advantage. This study tackles this omission in our understanding of how HRM can foster knowledge sharing in the boutique hotel sector and support the achievement of competitive advantage.

This chapter begins with the research rationale and justification. Then the research aim and objectives are identified and the key concepts of the research study outlined. The research context and scope of the research are also acknowledged. Lastly, the thesis structure is briefly presented.

### **1.1 Research Rationale**

There is a body of literature which identifies that competitive advantage can be developed through HRM supportive knowledge sharing (Bouncken and Pyo, 2002; Chen and Cheng, 2012; Kim and Lee, 2013). Porter (1985) suggests three generic competitive strategies for all businesses: 1) cost leadership strategy, seeking to be the lower cost producer in the industry; 2) differentiation strategy, seeking to be unique and widely valued by the customers; and 3) focus strategy, selecting a segment or group of segments in the industry and focusing on either cost leadership or differentiation strategy to serve the selected segments to the exclusion of others.

Boutique hotels are comprised of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and have become known for having unique amenities and highly personalized service (Day et al., 2012). This differentiates them from other types of hotels (Lim and Endean, 2009). Therefore, to gain a sustainable competitive advantage, boutique hotels have to focus on improving and delivering highly personalized services (McIntosh, 2005; Aggett, 2007), which are difficult for their competitors, especially larger hotels, to achieve or imitate (Lim and Endean, 2009).

The existing literature on knowledge-based organizations highlights the importance of knowledge in achieving organizational competitive advantage (Abdul-Jalal et al., 2013). By sharing knowledge within an organization, new ideas, processes, products and services are created and developed (Lin, 2007). Sharing knowledge enables companies to improve employee retention and increase employee productivity (Razak et al., 2016). The advancement of knowledge sharing allows organizations to achieve competitive advantage with regards to high quality services, and this is particularly true in the hotel industry (Chen and Cheng, 2012). Sharing knowledge can enhance employees' knowledge, skills and abilities to deliver high quality service (Donate et al., 2016). Sharing knowledge results in better coordination and communication, and this allows all team members to deliver the same quality of service and enhance team performance (Bouncken, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005). In addition, hotel organizations have a high degree of departmental interaction (O'Fallon and Rutherford, 2011). Knowledge sharing between departments introduces effective coordination and communication (Bouncken, 2002) as well as allowing all departments to have the same knowledge, information and understanding (Knox and Walsh, 2005). This helps reduce work errors and conflicts between departments, and ultimately, organizational performance is improved (Jones and Lockwood, 1989). Furthermore, literature (Yang, 2004 and 2009) points to quality of service being improved when employees, at all levels of organizational hierarchies, regularly share their knowledge across the entire organization (Wee, 2012). The challenge is to understand how boutique hotels can encourage knowledge sharing across their organizations.

Since knowledge sharing within organizations is recognized as one of the most valuable practices that allows them to achieve competitive advantage (Lin, 2007; Kim et al., 2015; Razak et al., 2016), many organizations try to encourage and facilitate knowledge sharing by using information technology (IT) systems support and/or HRM practices. While using IT can reduce barriers of time and space between employees and provide access to information, there are limitations, as it does not necessarily lead to the quality of knowledge sharing being improved (Hendriks, 1999). Knowledge sharing is personal and can be an extremely complicated process (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Liu and Liu 2011). Individuals may or may not share knowledge for many reasons, for example a lack of trust, fear of loss of power, poor social networks or organizational support, lack of an appropriate reward system, poor leadership or lack of sharing opportunities (Riege, 2005). The foundation of HRM practice is facilitating employees' abilities, motivations and opportunities to perform as the organization expects (Boxall and Purcell, 2011). This means employees' abilities, motivations and opportunities to share both explicit and tacit knowledge can all be developed through HRM. Therefore, HRM is potentially one of the most appropriate managerial tools available to encourage knowledge sharing behaviour and enhance the quality of services to achieve competitive advantage in this labour-intensive business sector (Bouncken, 2002).

For a decade, HRM researchers, whose focus has either been on the micro perspective (Lin, 2007; Aliakbar, 2012; Wee, 2012; Abdul-Jalal et al., 2013; Connell et al., 2014) or the social perspective (Wu et al., 2007; Aklamanu et al., 2016), have advanced our understanding of the role of HRM in fostering interpersonal and social factors of knowledge sharing (discussed further in the next chapter: Literature Review). However, these studies have been conducted in very different contexts, focussing on knowledge intensive companies such as banks, financial firms, research and development organizations, consultancy companies and larger establishments where knowledge and knowledge sharing are important to enhance organizational performance (Pervaiz et al., 2016). These organizations are likely to use sophisticated formal HRM practices to foster knowledge sharing approaches and behaviours (Pervaiz et al., 2016). Therefore, the existing knowledge of how

HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour may not be relevant to other sectors of business, particularly a sector such as the SME boutique hotel sector. There is limited research into this sector of the industry, in which highly personalized services differentiate boutique hotels from other types of hotels (Day et al., 2012; Lim and Endean, 2009). The capability to deliver high quality service depends on employees' knowledge, skills and abilities (Donate et al., 2016; Boella and Goss-Turner, 2013) as well as high levels of individual and departmental interaction and work interdependence (O'Fallon and Rutherford, 2011; Jones and Lockwood, 1989). These interactions and interdependencies can be achieved by sharing knowledge within an organization (as discussed). Therefore, research exploring how HRM can foster knowledge sharing in SME boutique hotels is required.

Our existing understanding of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing has been predominately generated by research undertaken at a single level of HRM, either at an individual, team or organizational level, with data collected from only one level of organizational actors, either employees (Foss et al., 2009; Kim and ko, 2014), or leaders and managers (Fong et al., 2011; Chuang et al., 2016). However, HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour exist within hierarchies involving social actors at various levels of organizations, who have different perceptions and experiences of HRM fostering knowledge sharing behaviour (Wright and Nishii, 2007; Yang, 2004, 2009). Therefore, undertaking a single level of investigation is inadequate to fully understand the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour (Chiang et al., 2011; Kim and Ko, 2014). Consequently, a multilevel research study involving the perspectives of actors throughout organizational hierarchies is appropriate to explore the role of HRM practice in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour across the entire organization (Wright and Nishii, 2007; Wang and Noe, 2010; Minbaeva, 2013; Renkema, 2016).

Previous studies (Foss et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2011; Sejeva, 2014) are dominated by deductive and quantitative investigation. They typically select particular HRM practices which are expected to be effective in supporting knowledge sharing conditions, and investigate whether those practices affect knowledge sharing behaviour. As a result, such studies can advance our knowledge of which HRM

practices facilitate knowledge sharing, but do not offer insights into how or why HRM achieves these effects (for more detail see Chapter 3: Research Methodology) (Kim and Ko, 2014). This is because knowledge sharing behaviour involves complicated subjective processes (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Liu and Liu, 2011) and actors at various levels in organizational hierarchies. These are difficult processes to capture and explain by quantitative methods or numerically (Hennink et al., 2011). Therefore, it is important for the current study to employ an alternative research methodology and approach. Makela et al. (2014) suggest an inductive qualitative research approach can help researchers collect data and information at various levels in organizations. This is adequate for a holistic analysis and can contribute to the contextual richness and the understanding of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization, whereas quantitative approaches would be less effective (Renkema et al., 2016; Makela et al., 2014). Creswell (2007) suggests a case study research design is appropriate to explore exotic cultures or complex social phenomena, such as HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization.

This research rationale and the justification lead to the aim and objectives of this study, which are identified in the following section.

## **1.2 Aims of the Research**

The main aim of the research is to examine the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels. In order to accomplish this aim, the following objectives are identified:

1. To critically review the literature on key concepts and theories of knowledge sharing behaviour and generic HRM practices, making specific reference to knowledge sharing behaviour and HRM in the hotel sector;
2. To develop a conceptual framework through which to understand HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels



3. To explore HRM and knowledge sharing practices and the behaviour of boutique hotel employees, managers and/or owners through qualitative research in Chiang Mai, Thailand

4. To critically analyse and evaluate the multilevel evidence of the role of HRM practices in facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour in relation to the conceptual framework

5. To make an academic contribution to knowledge in the field of HRM and knowledge-sharing practices in SME boutique hotels.

### **1.3 Key Concepts and Context of Research**

This section provides an outline of the key research concepts, including knowledge and knowledge sharing, HRM and the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour.

#### **1.3.1 Knowledge and Knowledge Sharing**

The term 'knowledge' is intangible and subjective, and this leads to challenges in identifying a consistent definition of the term (Bhatt, 2002). Polanyi (1958) separates knowledge into explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is typically seen as open knowledge in the form of communication and can be codified and shared easily (Polanyi, 1958). On the other hand, tacit knowledge is the intellectual capital or physical capabilities and skills that the individual cannot fully articulate, represent or codify (Polanyi, 1958). Referring to the hotel industry, Bouncken (2002) classifies knowledge into four categories, task-specific knowledge, task-related knowledge, trans-active memory and guest-related knowledge. These knowledge types are associated with the classic type of knowledge identified by Polanyi (1958) (more details of these categories and definitions are given in Chapter 2, Table 2.1).

The term 'knowledge sharing' is often used interchangeably with 'knowledge exchange' or 'knowledge transfer' (Wang and Noe, 2010). However, the term knowledge transfer tends to be used when studying knowledge sharing between

organizations while 'knowledge exchange' is more likely to be used when investigating knowledge sharing between individuals within organizations (Wang and Noe, 2010). The primary focus of this study is how HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour to bring competitive advantage through service quality improvement. The literature (Yang, 2004, 2009; Wee, 2012) suggests that to enhance service quality, employees at all levels of organizational hierarchies have to share their knowledge throughout the entire organization. Therefore, knowledge sharing in this study refers to the actions or processes that individuals at all levels of organizational hierarchies engage in to exchange knowledge with others to ensure the delivery of high quality services (for more detail see Chapter 2).

### **1.3.2 Human Resource Management**

Human resource management (HRM) refers to the policies, practices and systems that influence employee behaviour, attitude and performance. HRM, arguably, involves four main activities, recruitment and selection processes, training and development, reward and remuneration, and the employment relationship (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2013). These four main HRM activities facilitate employees' abilities, motivations and opportunities to perform as the organization expects (Boxall and Purcell, 2011).

The HRM construct is inherently multilevel and differs at different levels of organizational hierarchies. HRM approaches and practices are designed at firm-level, implemented at unit-level and perceived at individual-level (Boxall and Purcell, 2016). To date, there is limited knowledge about which levels of HRM approaches and practices are the most appropriate to investigate the reality of HRM and its effects (Klein and Kozlowski, 2000; Renkema et al., 2016). Therefore, multilevel logic is increasingly adopted when examining HRM and performance relationships which exist at multiple levels (Renkema et al., 2016; Makela et al., 2014). Multilevel researchers (Wright and Nishii, 2007; Kozlowski et al., 2013; Renkema et al., 2016) suggest that a multilevel research approach, involving the perspectives of various actors within organizational hierarchies, could bring added insight to cross-level HRM and performance research. However, there are limited

studies (Minbaeva, 2013) employing multilevel logic to the relationship of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour at various levels of organizational hierarchies. Therefore, this study seizes the opportunity to make a distinctive contribution and adopts this multilevel logic in order to examine the role of HRM practice in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour.

### **1.3.3 HRM and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

Various HRM approaches, such as individual HRM practices (Sajeva, 2014; Foss et al., 2009), combinations of HRM practices (Foss et al., 2015), high commitment HRM practices (Collins and Smith, 2006; Camelo-Ordez et al., 2011), high performance work systems through HRM (Lawler and Atmiyanandana, 2003) and micro foundation HRM studies (Minbaeva, 2013), are employed to investigate the role of HRM practice in knowledge sharing behaviour. These studies (Gange, 2009; Foss et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2011; Aklamamu et al., 2016; Donate et al., 2016) reveal that HRM practices promote interpersonal factors associated with individual knowledge sharing behaviour such as perceived self-efficacy, self-benefit and motivation. Also, HRM practices potentially establish social capital elements for knowledge sharing, such as social interaction, trust and shared goals (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Wu et al., 2007; Wee, 2012; Llopis and Foss, 2016; Pervaiz et al., 2016).

Our existing understanding of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour is generated mainly from studies undertaken with knowledge-intensive companies, such as hi-tech companies (Liu and Liu, 21011), research and development organizations (Camelo-ordaz, 2011), consultancy companies (Mueller, 2012) and larger hotels (Yang, 2004, 2009). However, these companies typically consider knowledge as valuable and important and as enhancing both individual and organizational performance in order to achieve competitive advantage (Pervaiz et al., 2016). Therefore, they deploy HRM practices to support knowledge sharing behaviour within their organizations. However, our understanding of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in labour-intensive companies, such as the hotel sector, where the capability of

delivering core business value depends highly on human resources and knowledge sharing behaviour, is limited (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2013).

#### **1.3.4 SME Boutique Hotels**

The 'boutique hotel' is widely recognized around the world as small, stylish accommodation with highly individualized services (Aggett, 2007; McIntosh, 2005; Khosravi et al., 2014). These attributes are difficult for larger chain hotels to deliver (McIntosh, 2005; Lim and Endean, 2009). In terms of operational characteristics, high levels of personal service are required for boutique hotels, while issues of ownership, star ratings and the number of employees (per guest) are less relevant (Lim and Endean, 2009). Boella and Goss-Turner (2013) assert that although boutique hotels are perceived as enthusiastic private hotel operations, they are continuing to grow into significant chains within larger multinational chains, such as Holiday Inn, Marriott and Hilton, all attempting to develop boutique hotel formats (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2013).

This study focuses on SMEs and private boutique hotel operations. This sector of the industry is more likely to use HRM in informal ways and exhibit less sophisticated approaches to HRM than multinational hotels (Burke and El-Kot, 2014; Çetinel et al., 2009). Although managers and owners of SME boutique hotels recognize human resources as important, it is suggested that there is a lack of attention devoted to developing human resource systems and processes in this sector (Burke and El-Kot, 2014). This is because boutique properties are more concerned with day-to-day operations, design features, financial viability as well as service quality (Burke and El-Kot, 2014). This leads their HRM approaches and practices to be perceived as unstructured. For example, there is a high reliance on the use of internal referrals and references for recruitment and selection, providing an informal and personal atmosphere, and open communication throughout the organization (Cooper and Burke, 2011; Nickson, 2013).

The use of HRM in informal and unstructured ways can be incompatible with the concept of 'high performance work systems' which are helpful for increasing organizational learning capabilities and knowledge sharing behaviour (Lawler and

Atmiyanandana, 2003). In some instances, SME characteristics naturally facilitate knowledge sharing behaviour (for more details see Chapter 2: Literature Review) (Harney and Nolan, 2015). Therefore, there is a need for deeper exploration of how SME boutique hotels use HRM practices to promote knowledge sharing behaviour to enhance their service quality and ambitions to achieve competitive advantage.

### **1.3.5 Chiang Mai City, Thailand**

This study is based in Thailand, in Southeast Asia, which lies between Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos. Hofstede and Bond (1984) identify Thai society as a collectivist culture, having strong relational connections between individuals. Such societies foster strong relationships in which everyone takes responsibility for other members of their group and shows consideration to others. Thais have a very strong commitment to the members of their group, and normally help each other (TAT, 2014). These values of Thai society are arguably very different from those of Western societies, where the majority of research (e.g. Salis and Williams, 2010; Foss et al., 2009; Minbaeva et al., 2012) into HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour has been conducted. This study anticipates contributing new knowledge of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour outside the highly individualistic cultures typically epitomized by most Western countries (Hofstede and Bond, 1984; Tidtichumrerporn, 2010).

This study focuses on the SME boutique hotel sector in Chiang Mai province. Chiang Mai city is one of the oldest cities in Thailand, established over 720 years ago. Chiang Mai is located in Northern Thailand and is the third largest city in the country with a population of 1,716,500 (Citypopulation, 2015). In the past, handicrafts and agricultural product processing were the main industries in Chiang Mai. However, since the mid-1960s, tourism has replaced commercial trade in the city, and recently Chiang Mai has become one of Asia's most attractive tourist destinations welcoming both backpackers and high-end tourists (TAT, 2014). It exhibits the strongest RevPAR growth, 19.3 percent, and occupancy growth, 13.4 percent, of all key cities of Thailand, including Bangkok, Phuket, Koh Samui and Pattaya (Michael, 2013).

The first hotel in Chiang Mai was built in 1921 (Tidtichumrerporn, 2010) and the first hotel to be called a boutique hotel was the Tamarind Village, built in 2002 (Tamarindvillage, 2013). Recently this sector of the industry has expanded rapidly across Chiang Mai city. Independently owned boutique hotels make up the highest number of newly opened hotels compared to other hotel types (Lasalle, 2013). According to a Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) publication listing Thailand's 100 best boutique hotels, eight hotels in Chiang Mai are ranked in the 30 most popular (TAT, 2015).

Recently, SME boutique hotels in Chiang Mai have faced increased competition from the rising number of hotel establishments. In 2013, the number of hotels increased by 9.02% from 2012, to 447 units (Tourism investment Geo- Informatics System, 2013). Since 2009, some hotels in Chiang Mai have adopted the 'blue ocean strategy' (Mauborgen and Kim, 2004) to find niche markets such as the high-end market and sophisticated clients. Another strategy some hotels have applied, to enhance occupancy rates, is a grand sales strategy, giving 30%- 50% discounts to customers (Jitpong, 2013). Inevitably, SME hotels, which have a shortage of capital and high operational costs, are adversely affected by this strategy (Jitpong, 2013). It seems there is less potential for SME boutique hotels to compete using this approach as they have a shortage of capital, particularly financial capital. The empirical literature (McIntosh, 2005; Aggett, 2007) suggests that to gain sustainable competitive advantage, boutique hotels should focus on delivering highly personalized services, which are difficult for competitors to imitate (Khosravi et al., 2014). Hotels can improve service quality by encouraging employees to share knowledge throughout, and across the entire organization (Bouncken, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005; Yang, 2004, 2009; Wee, 2012). Further research is required to explore how SME boutique hotels in Chiang Mai can foster knowledge sharing behaviour within their organizations in order to generate improvements in service quality and achieve competitive advantage.

Chiang Mai province is the home city of the researcher, and she is therefore familiar with both the language and cultural background of the area. This removes barriers to undertaking the research, such as language and cultural awareness, and assists

in understanding the meanings of, and backgrounds to, incidents and phenomena (Usunier, 1998). The researcher as an academic also has an existing relationship with the hotel industry which enhances the quality of the research and allows access to data, as connections and relationships are highly valued within Thai society.

#### **1.4 Structure of the Thesis**

To achieve the research aim and objectives of the thesis, the researcher critically examines previous studies, conducts fieldwork, analyses and discusses findings, and consequently concludes the investigation. The thesis is divided into six chapters.

##### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Chapter 1 provides the research rationale and research aim and objectives. It presents the key research concepts including knowledge and knowledge sharing, HRM and HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. The chapter outlines the context of the research which focuses on SME boutique hotels in Chiang Mai city, Thailand. It gives the rationale and structure of the thesis.

##### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Chapter 2 is a critical review of the literature in three parts: 1) knowledge sharing behaviour; 2) generic evidence on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour; and 3) HRM and knowledge sharing specifically in the hotel industry. The chapter begins with the definitions of knowledge and knowledge sharing behaviour and then explores the factors of knowledge sharing behaviour, clarifying the different knowledge sharing behaviours and practices at various levels within organizational hierarchies. The chapter explores, in-depth, the relationships between HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations. It develops the conceptual framework of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour based on the generic literature.

Next, the chapter discusses the hotel industry and clarifies the importance of knowledge sharing behaviour and its connection to hotel performance, the industry context and characteristics of knowledge sharing behaviour, and the factors influencing knowledge sharing in hotel organizations. It develops the conceptual framework of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour from the generic version to a specific version based on the hotel industry. The chapter ends with the identification of research gaps and the rationale for how the primary research is undertaken.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This chapter includes an explanation of the research philosophy and the methodology chosen for the investigation. Since this research views knowledge sharing behaviour as a form of social interaction between human resources at the organizational, departmental and operative levels in boutique hotels, an interpretive, qualitative research approach is adopted. The chapter presents the research design - a multiple case study approach - along with data collection and data analysis and the use of manual coding. The chapter argues for a multilevel study of five cases and uses a thematic analysis technique to analyse the data across various levels of organizational hierarchies across these cases. The data analysis involves two steps, an individual case analysis and a cross-case analysis.

### **Chapter 4: Research Findings**

This chapter presents the findings from the empirical research, which involves multiple sources of data from five boutique hotels in Chiang Mai city, Thailand. The chapter is divided into two parts. Part One presents the characteristics of each case study, the themes of HRM at various levels within each organization and the patterns of knowledge sharing behaviour within each case study. Part two presents the findings from the cross-case analysis, including comparisons of the findings from all five case studies.



## **Chapter 5: Discussion of the Findings**

This chapter critically analyses and discusses the findings from Chapter 4 in relation to previous studies and the conceptual framework developed. The empirical framework captures the role of HRM practices in facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels in Thailand.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter revisits the original aim and objectives of the research and identifies the research contributions. The study discovers the role of HRM practice activities and promoting individual, departmental and organizational knowledge sharing behaviour in Thai boutique hotels. Furthermore, this chapter presents the value of multilevel research and a qualitative approach to multilevel research when exploring hierarchical phenomena such HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization. It indicates the limitations of the investigation. The researcher finally reflects on her research journey in undertaking this thesis.

### **1.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter clarifies the research rationale and justification. There is a body of literature that argues that knowledge sharing contributes to establishing competitive advantage for knowledge-intensive companies and large hotels. The literature emphasises the role of HRM practices in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within those organizations. However, the understanding of how HRM fosters knowledge sharing in labour-intensive companies, particularly boutique hotels, is limited. The chapter then states the aim of this study which is to examine the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels. In order to accomplish this aim, five objectives are identified. It outlines the key research concepts and scope of the research are also acknowledged. Lastly, the thesis structure is briefly presented.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

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This chapter reviews the literature on the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. The chapter is divided into three parts: 1) knowledge sharing behaviour; 2) generic literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour; and 3) HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour specific to the hotel industry.

The first part of the chapter aims to understand knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations. It evaluates definitions of knowledge and knowledge sharing behaviour, and then explores the factors which influence knowledge sharing behaviour. In doing so, the value of a multilevel approach to understanding knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations is clarified. The second part of the chapter explores, in-depth, the role of HRM practices in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in organizations. It develops a generic conceptual framework of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour from the generic literature. The third part of the chapter evaluates the literature specific to the hotel industry. It begins with the importance of knowledge sharing in service quality improvement, then identifies the factors associated with knowledge sharing and explores the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in the hotel industry. As part of this evaluation, the chapter identifies the limitations of previous studies and suggests where future researchers should focus their attention.

### 2.1 Definitions of Knowledge Sharing

The term 'knowledge' is intangible and subjective and this leads to difficulties in defining the term (Bhatt, 2002). Knowledge is defined in many ways in the literature, for example Marakas (1999) defines knowledge as the '*organized combination of ideas, rules, procedures, and information*' (p.264). Pulakos et al. (2003) define knowledge as task information and the know-how to collaborate with others, policies and ideas. Srivastava (2006) agrees that knowledge includes task-relevant ideas, information and suggestions. Lin (2007) adds that knowledge also contains work-related experience and expertise.

In order to clarify the term knowledge, Polanyi (1958) separates knowledge into explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge refers to open knowledge in the form of communication that can be codified in, and easily shared through, media such as documents, books, databases and reports. In contrast, tacit knowledge is intellectual capital or physical capabilities and skills that the individual cannot fully articulate, represent or codify. It requires personal interaction and understanding (Bouncken, 2002). This kind of knowledge is difficult to communicate and sometimes impossible to document. Styhre (2004) points out that, although tacit knowledge is difficult to measure and represent, it is a critical asset for individual, group and organizational performance. Both explicit and tacit knowledge are recognized as valuable resources for organizations, and knowledge management (KM) is accepted as one of the important strategies for businesses to achieve in order to maintain a competitive advantage. KM is a process of creating, sharing, using and managing the knowledge and information of an organization (Witherspoon et al., 2013).

The theoretical study of Razak et al. (2016) highlights the most important activity and challenge of KM is knowledge sharing (KS). Sharing knowledge within an organization enables the company to improve employee retention and develop and increase employee productivity, particularly regarding innovation and creativity (Razak et al., 2016). Knowledge sharing is positively associated with the creation of

new products and services. To emphasize the importance of knowledge sharing, Wang and Noe (2010) review the literature on the relationship between knowledge sharing and firm performance, and the results confirm the broadly accepted belief that knowledge sharing is one of the most important managerial tools for enhancing firm performance and maintaining organizational competitive advantage (Abdul-Jalal et al., 2013). There are an increasing number of studies on knowledge sharing in organizations in a variety of disciplines, in particular knowledge-intensive organizations such as banks, financial firms, research and development organizations, consultancy companies, and service businesses (Newell, 2002; Wang and Noe, 2010).

The term 'knowledge sharing' is often used interchangeably with 'knowledge exchange' and 'knowledge transfer'. These terms all refer to the movement of knowledge between senders and recipients. However, the term knowledge transfer is often used to describe the movement of knowledge between different units, divisions and organizations, while knowledge exchange is more likely to refer to knowledge seeking and sharing among individuals within an organization (Wang and Noe, 2010). It seems that the terms knowledge exchange and knowledge sharing are used more interchangeably when investigations focus on individuals' knowledge sharing behaviour. For example, Kim and Lee (2013) define 'knowledge sharing behaviour' in their study on employees' knowledge sharing behaviour as the process whereby individuals mutually exchange their knowledge. The study of Kim and Lee (2013) combines the term 'knowledge collection and donation' when referring to the exchange of knowledge, while Mat et al. (2016) define these two activities as knowledge sharing activity. Minbaeva (2013) uses the terms 'knowledge providing' and 'knowledge receiving' instead of knowledge donating and collecting to refer to knowledge sharing (see Table 2.1).

**Table2. 1** Definitions of Knowledge sharing

Author	Definition
Lin (2007)	A social interaction culture, involving the exchange of work-related experience, expertise, know-how and contextual information through the whole department or organization (p.315).
Witherspoon et al. (2013)	A process in knowledge management that is used in creating, harvesting and sustaining business processes (p.250).
Kim and Lee (2013)	The process whereby individuals mutually exchange (collecting and donating) their knowledge and jointly create new knowledge (p.327).
Minbaeva (2013)	The providing and receiving of information or know-how that is relevant to the accomplishment of organizational tasks (p.379).
Razak et al. (2016)	The practices of exchange and dissemination of ideas, experiences and knowledge with others to ensure the knowledge continues, sustains and is retained in the business (p.547).

Knowledge transfer is used when studying knowledge sharing between units or organizations (Wang and Noe, 2010; Hu et al., 2009), while knowledge exchange is more likely to be used when investigating knowledge sharing among individuals within organizations (Lin, 2007; Kim and Lee, 2013; Razak et al., 2016). The literature (Bounchen, 2002; Witherspoon et al., 2013) reveals that both explicit and tacit knowledge are valuable resources for organizations to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage. Therefore, this study uses the term 'knowledge sharing' to refer to the actions that individuals take to exchange both explicit and tacit knowledge with others within organizations.

Knowledge sharing within an organization is hierarchical and exists at an individual and collective level (Wang and Noe, 2010). It is extremely complicated processes (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Liu and Liu, 2011) and is not easy for many organizations to foster employee's willingness to share knowledge for many reasons. For example, Riege (2005) points out that individuals themselves hoard knowledge due to a lack of trust and poor social networks, along with the fear of loss of power. Barriers to sharing knowledge in organizations can be caused by poor

organizational support, including a lack of appropriate reward systems, inappropriate information technology or a lack of leadership and sharing opportunities (Riege, 2005). Knowledge sharing may differ depending on the individual who shares the knowledge, and with whom (Chen and Cheng, 2012). Identifying factors encouraging knowledge sharing behaviour might provide a deeper understanding of knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization. The next section explores the factors which influence knowledge sharing behaviour.

## **2.2 Factors Influencing Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

A review of the literature on knowledge sharing behaviour reveals three main perspectives employed in investigating the factors which encourage knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations: micro factors, social factors and those associated with management perspectives.

### **2.2.1 The Micro Perspective**

The micro perspective views knowledge sharing as being exhibited through an individual's behaviour (Chen and Cheng, 2012). This perspective adopts psychological theories such as the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and motivational theory (Gagne, 2009) in order to understand knowledge sharing behaviour at the individual level. The micro perspective literature emphasizes how knowledge sharing behaviour is influenced by individuals' perceptions of their ability or perceived self-efficacy, and their perceptions of the benefits and costs of knowledge sharing, which refers, in this context, to intrinsic motivation. These factors, in turn, promote an individual's willingness to participate in knowledge sharing behaviour.

#### **Knowledge Self-efficacy**

The term 'self-efficacy' is defined by Bandura (1989) as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task. An individual's sense of self-efficacy can play a major role in how one approaches goals, tasks, and challenges. The literature on knowledge sharing behaviour (Hsu et al., 2006; Wee, 2012; Aliakbar et al., 2012) reveals how knowledge self-efficacy influences attitudes

towards knowledge sharing, which in turn affect knowledge sharing behaviour. In the context of this study, an attitude towards knowledge sharing is individual's positive or negative feelings about performing knowledge sharing (Fishbein and Azen, 1975). The work of Lin (2007) states a positive attitude or willingness creates feelings of enjoyment in sharing knowledge. Lin's (2007) study examines factors of individuals' sharing knowledge in large organizations in Taiwan. The study proposes three main factors which might influence knowledge sharing behaviour, individual factors (including enjoyment in helping others, and knowledge self-efficacy), organizational factors (including top management support and rewards), and technology factors (namely information and communication use). The findings show that enjoyment in helping others and knowledge self-efficacy are associated with employees' willingness to share knowledge. The study of Aliakbar et al. (2012) shows individual factors, including expected association and contribution and knowledge self-efficacy, influence attitudes towards knowledge sharing. Lin (2007) points out that those employees who are confident in their knowledge sharing abilities are likely to have a strong motivation to share their knowledge among colleagues. Similarly, Constant et al. (1994) investigate employee attitudes towards information and knowledge sharing in a technical context. They suggest that employees with a higher education and longer work experience have more positive attitudes towards sharing information and knowledge and those employees are more likely to share their expertise among their teams. The study is consistent with the research of Wee (2012) and Hsu et al. (2006) which show that self-efficacy has a strong positive effect on knowledge sharing behaviour.

Likewise, individuals who perceive they have low self-efficacy are less willing to share their knowledge and experiences with others, particularly when they perceive a high level of competition. Connelly et al. (2014) employ adaptive cost theory and self-efficacy to explore how individual characteristics, namely self-efficacy and trait competitiveness, and situational perceptions, including busyness and perceived competition, impact knowledge sharing behaviour. They conducted research with students who request knowledge from other students doing the same tasks. The findings show that students who perceive time pressures seem less likely

to share their knowledge because they are too busy to share knowledge. The study highlights that perceived competition by itself is not associated with knowledge sharing, but combined with low task self-efficacy it creates a sense of time pressure. This leads to students feeling too busy to share knowledge, particularly when they are asked to. Although, self-efficacy plays a major role in an individual's willingness to share, other factors are found to be influential in knowledge sharing behaviour, such as intrinsic motivation.

### **Self-benefits as Intrinsic Motivators**

The term 'self-benefit' in this current study refers to one's perception of the benefits and costs of knowledge sharing, based on social exchange theory. Blau (1964) proposes that one analyses the perceived ratio of benefit to cost and then bases one's actions and decisions on the expectation of rewards.

The study on the influence of the perceived cost of sharing knowledge, affective trust in colleagues and the relationship between affective commitment and knowledge sharing by Casimir et al. (2012) classifies the cost of knowledge sharing into three groups. There are 1) risks of losing self-interest such as job security, organizational status or rewards; 2) potential abuses of knowledge by the recipient, for example incompetence in applying knowledge; and 3) opportunity costs, namely time, effort and giving away power that cannot be taken back or controlled. Furthermore, Casimir et al. (2012) point out that the perceived personal cost of knowledge sharing can make knowledge sharing behaviour less likely.

Alhalhouli et al. (2014) support the assertion that there is a perceived loss of power when sharing knowledge which affects attitudes to knowledge sharing behaviour. Similarly, the review paper on knowledge sharing behaviour by Wang and Noe (2010) shows that perceived cost is negatively associated with knowledge sharing. On the other hand, perceived benefits have a positive connection to knowledge sharing. Brown et al. (2013) point out that, depending on the nature of the knowledge shared and the individual's social network, employees are likely to find more benefit in person-to-person knowledge sharing than the codified knowledge



provided by organizations. Additionally, 'knowledge complexity' and 'knowledge teachability', which are difficult to understand and codify, increase the likelihood of finding value in person-to-person knowledge transfer (Brown et al., 2013). Liu and Liu (2011) investigate knowledge sharing among research and development (R&D) professionals in a high-tech industry in Taiwan. They find that individuals who believe that sharing knowledge will affect their performance are more willing to do so.

Previous literature on the perceived benefits and costs of knowledge sharing (Mueller, 2012; Amayah, 2013) reveals that individuals share knowledge not for their own benefit (reward or reputation) but when they are concerned with team and organizational benefits (work effectiveness) and have job and goal orientation (intrinsic motivation). Wee (2012) points out that those employees who believe sharing knowledge is useful and of benefit to others and the company, are typically willing to share their knowledge. Amayah (2013) identifies the motivations of knowledge sharing in public organizations in the Midwest, USA. The study suggests three factors that might influence an individual's motivation for knowledge sharing, namely personal benefits, community-related conditions, and organizational norms. By conducting research with professionals, and service and maintenance employees in academic institutions, the study found personal benefit, for example a better professional reputation, impacts negatively on individual knowledge sharing. This is similar to the study of Mueller (2012) which explores knowledge sharing between project teams in an engineering consultancy, considered a knowledge intensive company, in Austria (Newell, 2002). The study reveals that, although top-management do not provide a formal knowledge sharing environment, team members share their knowledge because of their sense of personal responsibility, intrinsic motivation, flat organizational structure and shared leadership. Employees are willing to share their knowledge because they have an intrinsic motivation. Employees want to make work more effective, but not because they expect something in return (Mueller, 2012).

It is evident from micro perspective views of knowledge sharing behaviour (at an individual level) that the exchange of knowledge is voluntary and highly dependent

on individuals' attitudes towards, and willingness to share, their knowledge (Zalk et al., 2011). This willingness is influenced by interpersonal factors, namely knowledge self-efficacy and ability, self-benefits and intrinsic motivation. Individuals who perceive themselves to have knowledge self-efficacy and ability are more willing to share their knowledge than those who perceive themselves to have low self-efficacy (Hsu et al., 2006; Wee, 2012; Aliakbar et al., 2012). In addition, individuals who perceive the personal benefits of knowledge sharing, such as reward and reputation, are more likely to share their knowledge than those who perceive the personal costs of knowledge sharing (Casimir et al., 2012; Alhalhouli et al., 2014; Brown et al., 2013; Liu and Liu, 2011). However, the literature (Wee, 2012; Mueller, 2012; Sajeve, 2014) highlights that individuals can be more concerned with team and organizational benefits (work effectiveness) than their own benefits when sharing knowledge. Individuals are more willing to share their knowledge when they have intrinsic motivation such as job orientation or being highly responsible (Mueller, 2012; Kim and Lee, 2013).

The micro perspective focuses on individuals' psychological factors linked to knowledge sharing, which social perspective researchers (for example, Llopis-Corcoles, 2011; Casimir et al., 2012) argue offers a limited view because knowledge sharing is a cooperative behaviour. Individuals act as parts of social systems when they knowledge share, therefore their behaviour is influenced by social factors (Llopis-Corcoles, 2011).

### **2.2.2 The Social Perspective of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

Social perspective researchers (Jimenez and Valle, 2013; Bakker et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2007; Casimir et al., 2012) focus on knowledge sharing at the collective-level, either the team or organizational level. They typically employ social exchange theory (SET) in which an exchange of valuable resources is expected to benefit two parties, affecting individual actions (Blau, 1964), and social capital theory to identify factors which influence knowledge sharing behaviour within teams and organizations. These studies reveal that social trust, social relationships, personal

interactions, team members, social referents and the social climate all influence knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations.

### **Social Trust**

Social trust matters in knowledge sharing behaviour (Wang and Noe, 2010). There are studies (e.g. Bakker et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2007; Casimir et al., 2012; Wu and Lee, 2016) which believe that trust is one of the most important elements of social capital, and influences knowledge sharing behaviour. The study of Wu et al. (2007) examines the factors fostering knowledge sharing at team level, by conducting research with team leaders and members, in travel agencies and services in Taiwan. Their investigation finds that affect-based trust and social interaction within a team shape the team's degree of knowledge sharing and learning intensity at team level. They explain that trust encourages team members to '*open up*' (Wu et al., 2007, p.335) to each other when they are given the opportunity to learn and share.

Previous studies employing social exchange theory (e.g. Casimir et al., 2012; Jimenez and Valle, 2013) highlight that trust is a key factor in successful social exchange. The study of Jimenez and Valle (2013) on the effect of HRM in knowledge sharing processes emphasizes the way interpersonal trust fosters knowledge sharing by removing the barriers to sharing. Trust can also reduce costs and create an affective commitment to knowledge sharing (Jimenez and Valle, 2013). Additionally, Casimir et al. (2012) study the influence of the perceived cost of sharing knowledge and affective trust between colleagues and the relationship between affective commitment and knowledge sharing. They collected data from employees of 15 knowledge intensive organizations, which Windrum and Tomlison (1999, p.3) define as organizations '*which depends on professional knowledge corresponding to a specific technical or functional domain*'. The findings show that trust in colleagues is a moderator of affective commitment to knowledge sharing and the perceived cost of knowledge sharing within a team. They point out that employees are more willing to engage in knowledge sharing when they have a high level of trust in their team members. Similarly, Wu and Lee (2016) apply the concept of group social capital to identify factors which promote a group's

knowledge sharing, conducting research with 86 work groups in the high-tech industry in Taiwan. The findings from their survey reveal that social interactions within a work group are positively related to group trust and a group with high trust creates knowledge sharing behaviour among its members.

Trust is one of the most important factors in knowledge sharing between teams and subunits. To emphasize this, a case study of knowledge sharing between engineering project teams by Mueller (2012) shows that if top-management trusts its employees and project teams to perform responsibly, it encourages employees to share their knowledge among the teams, and when employees trust their managers, they become more willing to engage in knowledge sharing. Similarly, De Long and Fahey (2000) identify ways in which culture influences the behaviours central to knowledge creation, sharing, and use. They assert that the level of trust which exists between the organization, its subunits, and its employees greatly influences the amount of knowledge sharing both between individuals and from individuals into the organization's systems.

There are some studies (e.g. Amayah, 2013; Yeo and Gold, 2014) which argue that trust might not necessarily encourage willingness to share knowledge, but is still associated with knowledge sharing behaviour. The study of Yeo and Gold (2014) employs a mixed methodology, online survey and semi-structured interviews, to examine the extent to which trust matters in employees' knowledge sharing attitudes and behaviours in telecommunication organizations in Saudi Arabia. Their study reveals a clear understanding of how trust matters in knowledge sharing behaviour. The findings indicate that, although trust is not found to significantly influence attitudes towards sharing or willingness to share, it is a mediator between knowledge sharing attitudes and behaviours to the extent that '*it creates new frames of reference to enable individuals to modify the way they think and act in shifting contexts*' (Yeo and Gold, 2014, p.113).

Arguably, it seems that trust encourages team members to open up to each other, which introduces open communication for sharing knowledge (Wu et al., 2007). Trust enhances social norms for knowledge sharing within groups. Groups with a

high level of trust have a higher degree of knowledge sharing than groups with a lower level of trust (Wu et al., 2007). In addition, social exchange researchers (Jimenez and Valle, 2013; Casimir et al., 2012) reveal that trust reduces the cost of knowledge sharing among team members and creates affective commitment to knowledge sharing within teams (Casimir et al., 2012) and between teams (Mueller, 2012).

### **Social Interaction and Relationships**

The term 'team' refers to the closest social context in which individuals normally interact with colleagues (Xue et al., 2011). The interactions within teams encourage knowledge sharing behaviour rather than social trust (Bakker et al., 2006; Amayah, 2013; Chiu et al., 2006). The study of Amayah (2013), a quantitative investigation into public sector organizations, specifically academic organizations, points out that trust is not a significant factor in the willingness to share knowledge for individuals who feel that sharing knowledge is not sensitive and would not lead to a loss of their power. Rather, a sense of community and social interaction are found to significantly influence the willingness for knowledge sharing behaviour. Similarly, Chiu et al. (2006) investigate social factors influencing knowledge sharing in a virtual community. They reveal that social interaction, reciprocity and identification increase the quantity of individual knowledge sharing. On the other hand, trust does not have a significant impact on the volume of knowledge sharing behaviour. Individuals are willing to share their knowledge as a result of close and frequent interactions among team members, fairness in the exchange of knowledge, and strong feelings towards the community. Liao et al (2004) support the argument that the relationship among employees and between employees and the organization impact knowledge sharing behaviour within the organization. Liao et al (2004) investigate employee relationships within organizations and the attitudes and intentions toward knowledge sharing within teams in a Taiwanese finance and securities firm. The findings from the interviews together with questionnaires with 33 participants highlight that when the relationships between employees and the organization are good, employees are willing to share their knowledge voluntarily and unconditionally. In contrast, if relationships between employees and the

organization are not good, employees are less likely to share their knowledge (Liao et al, 2004). This is consistent with Bakker et al. (2006) who investigated the role of trust in knowledge sharing when an organization undertakes new product development projects. Collecting data from 23 teams and 91 employees, the study shows that trust is a poor indicator of knowledge sharing, and the relationships between team members has a greater impact on knowledge sharing, particularly within longer-lived teams. The study highlights that the longer a team has been formed, the higher the degree of knowledge sharing within the team (Bakker et al., 2006).

This means trust is less associated with knowledge sharing than the duration of team membership (Bakker et al., 2006). This is supported by the study of Zhuge (2002), which explores the effectiveness of knowledge sharing in teams, and points out that knowledge can be shared by team members better than with those outside the team or managers. Team members work on the same types of tasks, and therefore find their knowledge and experience to be more valuable to share with others in the team. Team members have similar knowledge structures, which leads them to understand each other easily when sharing knowledge (Zhuge, 2002).

From the existing research, it can be seen that individuals who perceive sharing knowledge as not sensitive and not leading to a loss of their power are typically willing to share their knowledge as a result of close interactions (Amayah, 2013; Chiu et al., 2006) and existing relationships between members of teams (Bakker et al., 2006). This is likely to be due to team members having common interests which enable them to share their knowledge effectively (Zhuge, 2002).

### **Team Members as Social Referents**

Members of teams are knowledge sharing facilitators and referents (Lee et al., 2015; Boh and Wong, 2015). Lee et al. (2015) emphasize the role of team members and co-workers as facilitators, encouraging individuals to share knowledge within teams. They investigate how co-worker support and individual characteristics (exchange of ideology and learning orientation) influence knowledge sharing behaviour. Their study reveals that co-worker support and learning orientation are

positively connected to knowledge sharing. When co-worker support is low, knowledge sharing is mainly dependent on individuals' characteristics. The study points out that, to encourage knowledge sharing behaviour, an organization should provide a work environment that encourages peers to support each other (Lee et al., 2015). This is discussed further in the next section, Social Climate for Knowledge Sharing.

Co-workers operate as key social referents for knowledge sharing both within and outside their teams. The study by Boh and Wong (2015) adopts the concept of social influence to investigate how key social referents influence individuals' knowledge sharing behaviours within and outside their teams. The findings from a survey show that co-workers' knowledge sharing behaviours have a significant influence over individual knowledge sharing within and outside teams. Boh and Wong (2015) explain that when individuals experience uncertainty about how to react in a certain situation, they look for social cues to gain more reliable information on which to base their decisions and model their behaviour.

### **Social Climate for Knowledge Sharing**

The literature on organizational knowledge sharing climates (Boh and Wong, 2013) reveals that both cooperative and competitive climates have effects on knowledge sharing behaviour. Boh and Wong (2013) investigate perceptions of organizational climate and manager effectiveness influencing individuals' perceived usefulness of knowledge sharing mechanisms (KSMs), the practices that an organization adopts to encourage the sharing, integrating, interpreting, and applying of knowledge embedded in individuals and groups. The study identifies three KSMs: 1) informal personalization of KSMs; 2) formal codification of KSMs; and 3) formal personalization of KSMs. It identifies two organizational climate types that affect individuals' knowledge sharing behaviour, cooperative and competitive climates. Cooperative climates are environments where co-workers display a high level of fellowship and helpfulness, whereas competitive climates are environments where employees perceive organizational rewards to be contingent on comparisons of their performance against that of others outside their units (Boh and Wong, 2013).

Collecting survey data from 1036 employees from five subsidiaries of an organization, the study indicates that when employees perceive a competitive climate they are more likely to use formal codification and personalization mechanisms, such as formal meetings. Employees who perceive cooperative climates prefer informal personalization mechanisms to share knowledge, such as talking in the staff canteen when sharing knowledge. This means knowledge sharing can be enabled in different social contexts in cooperative and competitive climates (Boh and Wang, 2013).

A study based in the USA by Xue et al. (2011) investigates the relationship between team climate and empowering leadership on knowledge sharing behaviour at team level. It shows two ways in which team climate and empowering leadership can influence knowledge sharing within a team. Indirectly, these factors work together to influence knowledge sharing attitudes, which in turn lead to actual knowledge sharing behaviour. Directly, the social climate itself creates social pressure, and empowering leadership facilitates conditions that encourage knowledge sharing (Xue et al., 2011).

Llopis and Foss (2016) combine individual factors (job autonomy) and social factors (social climate) to affect knowledge sharing behaviour. They emphasize that job autonomy and social climate are complementary to knowledge sharing. When employees show a low level of intrinsic motivation, a cooperative climate can positively impact knowledge sharing. They explain that a cooperative climate serves as a '*supplementary source of motivation*' (Llopis and Foss, 2016, p.141) for an employee who does not naturally have an interest in knowledge sharing. This is consistent with the qualitative study of Mueller (2012) which explores the knowledge sharing between project teams in engineering consultancies in Austria. The data collected from interviews, observations, company data and group discussions within one engineering consultancy emphasizes that knowledge sharing between teams takes place although the top managers do not promote a formal knowledge sharing environment. Employees still share their knowledge between teams because they have high levels of personal responsibility and intrinsic motivation and perceive the shared leadership role of the team leader.



The evidence from the social climate literature shows that knowledge sharing behaviours differ in cooperative and competitive climates (Boh and Wang, 2013). Social climate, by itself, does not reinforce a team's knowledge sharing behaviour. There is a need for other factors, such as empowering leadership (Xue et al., 2011) or job autonomy (Boh and Wong, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016) to encourage knowledge sharing behaviour within a team. It appears that a knowledge sharing climate or environment serves as a '*supplementary source of knowledge sharing motivation*' (Llopis and Foss, 2016, p.141). On the other hand, personal responsibility, intrinsic motivation and the perceived shared leadership role of the team leader are primary sources of knowledge sharing motivation between teams (Mueller, 2012).

Social perspective researchers (Jimenez and Valle, 2013; Bakker et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2007; Casimir et al., 2012) focus on examining the social factors which encourage knowledge sharing from a collective perspective either within teams (Wu et al., 2007; Casimir et al., 2012; Wu and Lee, 2016) or organizations (between or across the entire organization) (Boh and Wong, 2013; Mueller, 2012). This perspective reveals that social trust, social interaction, relationships, social referents and social climate influence knowledge sharing both within and between teams. However, individuals are more likely to share their knowledge within their teams than outside of their immediate work teams (Zhuge, 2002).

Making comparisons between interpersonal and social factors, knowledge sharing behaviour is found to be mainly dependent on each individual's interpersonal factors, particularly their intrinsic motivation, specifically their job orientation and responsibility features (Kim and Ko, 2014; Mueller, 2012; Lee et al., 2015). Meanwhile, social factors such as social climate and co-worker relationships serve as supplementary sources of knowledge sharing behaviour (Lee et al., 2015; Boh and Wong, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016).

Since knowledge sharing is widely recognized as enhancing organizational performance to achieve competitive advantage, numerous knowledge sharing studies identify factors associated with knowledge sharing behaviour both

individually and socially (as discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2). There are some studies which focus on the responsibility of managers to facilitate knowledge sharing for the benefit of organizations, as explored in the next section.

### **2.2.3 The Management Perspective**

Management perspective researchers (Hsu, 2006; Fey and Furu, 2008) apply their attention to understanding the role of managers in encouraging individuals' knowledge sharing behaviour. The literature reveals two main knowledge sharing facilitators within organizations, senior managers and line managers.

#### **Senior Managers and Organizational Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

Numerous studies focus on senior managers and knowledge sharing in organizations (for example Hsu, 2006; Fey and Furu, 2008) and investigate the role of top managers in influencing employees' knowledge sharing behaviours. These studies reveal top managers as being highly involved in motivating employees learning and sharing behaviour across the entire organization. Hsu (2006) identifies organizational practices that enhance employee motivation towards knowledge sharing behaviour in manufacturing organizations in Taiwan. Three practices enhance employees' knowledge sharing behaviours including continuous company-wide learning initiatives, performance management systems and information disclosure, in order to create a climate of sharing. Specifically, Hsu (2006) highlights CEOs as important facilitators of encouraging employees' knowledge sharing behaviours and promoting a knowledge sharing climate. Lin and Lee (2004) and Fey and Furu (2008) support the idea that senior managers hold a position of authority in encouraging employees' knowledge sharing behaviours. They are in a strong position to promote a knowledge sharing culture within an organization because they have autonomy, power and the prestige to establish a climate and culture of knowledge sharing. To emphasize this, the study of Wee (2012) explores the integration of knowledge sharing in business strategy and in enhancing organizational performance in Malaysia. The study concludes that top-management support is effective in influencing employees' knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations, particularly in the role of facilitating social

interaction where employees can share their knowledge effectively and comfortably, such as through the provision of effective communication channels.

Some literature (Lin and Lee, 2004; Fey and Furu, 2008) investigates the factors that influence senior managers' intentions to promote knowledge sharing. Lin and Lee (2004) investigate the factors influencing senior managers' intentions to encourage employee and organizational knowledge sharing behaviour. The findings show that attitudes towards subjective norms and perceived behaviour control affect senior managers' intentions to encourage employees' knowledge sharing behaviours. Additionally, senior managers' experiences, knowledge and abilities affect the establishment of organizational knowledge sharing behaviour. Lin and Lee (2004) point out that the decision of whether to encourage employees' knowledge sharing behaviours is dependent on motivational factors, namely corporate-benefits (firm performance) and self-benefits (compensation and rewards). Similarly, the study of Fey and Furu (2008) examines how incentive compensation, especially bonus pay, affects top managers sharing knowledge in MNCs in Finland and China. The findings indicate that bonus pay does not influence top managers' knowledge sharing behaviour in either of these countries, but rather that bonus pay encourages them to motivate employees in sharing their knowledge which, in turn, benefits firm performance.

In short, the literature on senior managers and organizational knowledge sharing behaviour reveals the roles of top and senior managers in promoting knowledge sharing mechanisms (culture and climate) as well as the characteristics for encouraging employees' knowledge sharing behaviours for entire organizations. The literature based on team and unit-level studies (MacNiel, 2003, 2004; Xue et al., 2011; Mueller, 2012) claims that senior managers are responsible for promoting knowledge sharing for the entire organization, however, an organization often has subunits with distinct subcultures that need specific practices to promote knowledge sharing (Boh and Wang, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016). Therefore, an argument emerges for team or unit-based studies of knowledge sharing behaviour, explored next.

## **Line Managers and Departmental Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

In the management literature, the term 'line manager' is used interchangeably with 'supervisor' and 'team leader' (MacNeil, 2003). Therefore, in the context of this study, line manager also refers to supervisors and team leaders. The literature based on organizational perspectives (e.g. MacNeil, 2003, 2004) proposes that an organizational hierarchy has senior managers in the top positions and line managers as middle managers. This means line managers can mediate, negotiate and interpret connections between the organizational and operational levels. In other words, the line manager is at the interface and offers an important communication link between senior managers and operational employees. The conceptual study of MacNeil (2003) describes the line manager as a knowledge sharing facilitator at team level. MacNeil (2003) explains that since line managers are members of management, they have the authority to promote a knowledge sharing climate in their teams by communicating positive sharing and learning environments that create the appropriate level of trust in their teams.

The literature justifies a specific leadership style which influences knowledge sharing behaviour. For example, the studies of Xue et al. (2011) and Mueller (2012) point out that empowering leaders facilitates and encourages knowledge sharing within teams. When management show they trust employees to perform and take their own responsibilities, employees are more likely to share their knowledge among team members. Ma and Cheng (2013) examine the influence of ethical leadership on employee creativity. They survey employees and supervisors from four Chinese companies and the findings show that ethical leadership is positively associated with employees' knowledge sharing behaviours and significantly relates to their self-efficacy which, in turn, enhances employee creativity within the organization. Dong et al. (2017) promote the idea that transformational leadership, where a person stimulates and inspires followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes, supports knowledge sharing within teams. This study considers this leadership style to foster individual and team knowledge sharing behaviour and to enhance collective creativity. Dong et al. (2017) develop a model of the relationship between transformational leadership and team creativity by analysing data from

team members, team leaders and direct supervisors in high-tech organizations. Team knowledge sharing benefits team creativity with the support of transformational leadership (Dong et al., 2017).

The literature on employee voice and knowledge sharing behaviour (Nastiezaie and Kuhdasht, 2017; Kremer et al, 2009) also identifies that leadership style which fosters knowledge sharing behaviour. For example, Nastiezaie and Kuhdasht (2017) determine the relationship between employee voice and sharing knowledge amongst the faculty members of Sistan and Balouchestan University. The findings reveal that a moral leadership enhances an altruistic voice, which increases sharing knowledge among faculty members. On the other hand, a dictatorial leadership creates obedient voices. Employees under a dictatorial leadership style reveal worries about expressing their ideas and thoughts. This is recognized as hindering knowledge sharing in a university context (Nastiezaie and Kuhdasht, 2017).

There are widely recognized characteristics of line managers which influence team members' knowledge sharing behaviours, including being empowering (Xue et al., 2011; Mueller, 2012), transformational (Dong et al., 2017) and ethical (Ma and Cheng, 2013). There is, however, limited literature exploring the role of line managers in influencing their team members' knowledge sharing behaviour. Boh and Wong (2015) explore the roles of social influence on individuals' knowledge sharing behaviour by employing mixed methods and conducting research with managers and non-managerial employees from Alpha Inc. The findings reveal that unit managers and unit co-workers perform as key social referents in influencing the knowledge sharing behaviour of individuals. Therefore, the knowledge sharing behaviour of unit managers enables the establishment of knowledge sharing attitudes and norms at unit level (Boh and Wong, 2015)

It can be seen that facilitating and encouraging employee's knowledge sharing behaviour is the responsibility of senior managers and line managers. Senior managers are in a position to promote a knowledge sharing climate and culture for the entire organization (Hsu, 2006; Fey and Furu, 2008; Lin and Lee, 2004) as well as facilitating social interaction in which employees can share their knowledge

effectively (Wee, 2012). However, there are subunits with different subcultures within organizations which need specific practices to promote knowledge sharing (Boh and Wang, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016). Line managers, as members of management, have the authority to promote knowledge sharing within their teams (MacNeil, 2003, 2004).

In summary, the review of the literature on factors influencing knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations reveals three main research perspectives including micro, social and management perspectives. The micro perspective research (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Gagne, 2009) focuses on knowledge sharing behaviour at the individual level. This perspective identifies the interpersonal factors needed for individual knowledge sharing behaviour, namely perceived self-efficacy and self-benefit, which are considered intrinsic motivators, along with job orientation and responsibility (Kim and Lee, 2013; Mueller, 2012; Sajeve, 2014; Hsu et al., 2006; Wee, 2012; Aliakbar et al., 2012). These factors, in turn, influence willingness to knowledge share individually. Micro perspective research is more likely to investigate the psychological factors of knowledge sharing while social perspective researchers (Jimenez and Valle, 2013; Bakker et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2007; Casimir et al., 2012) claim that knowledge sharing is a cooperative behaviour exhibited by individuals within social systems. Social perspective investigation is more likely to study knowledge sharing at a collective level, either within teams (Wu et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2015; Wu and Lee, 2016), or between teams and the entire organizations (Boh and Wang, 2013; Mueller, 2012). These social perspective investigations reveal social factors such as social trust, social relationships, social interactions and the social climate for sharing to influence the willingness to show knowledge sharing both within and between teams. Furthermore, the literature focusing on teams' knowledge sharing behaviour (Lee et al., 2015; Boh and Wong, 2015) points out that team members and co-workers are social referents and facilitators, encouraging individuals to share knowledge within teams.

Management perspective research (MacNeil, 2003, 2004; Hsu, 2006; Fey and Furu, 2008) views the management as the key facilitator encouraging employees to share their knowledge. This perspective reveals senior managers to be in the pivotal

position, having the necessary autonomy, power and prestige to promote and establish social factors, particularly a climate and culture of knowledge sharing (Hsu, 2006; Fey and Furu, 2008), as well as the social interaction and effective communication channels (Wee, 2012) needed for knowledge sharing across the entire organization (MacNeil, 2003, 2004; Xue et al., 2011; Mueller, 2012). Nonetheless, senior managers' own experiences, knowledge and abilities also affect the establishment of a knowledge sharing culture and climate (Lin and Lee, 2004). Corporate benefits and individual benefits are the key factors which motivate senior managers to facilitate and promote a knowledge sharing environment and, in turn, motivate employees to share their knowledge (Fey and Furu, 2008). Line managers are an important communication link between the firm level and the operational level (MacNeil, 2003, 2004). As such, they have the authority to implement a knowledge sharing climate within their teams by communicating a positive sharing and learning climate at an organizational level to fit their specific team cultures (MacNeil, 2003, 2004; Wang, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016). It seems that leadership styles are a crucial factor in fostering individual and team knowledge sharing behaviour (Xue et al., 2011; Mueller, 2012; Dong et al., 2017; Ma and Cheng, 2013). Line managers are not only in the right position to facilitate knowledge sharing, but are also the key social referents of knowledge sharing in a team with their specific leadership styles, particularly transformation leadership (Mueller, 2012; Boh and Wong, 2015)

### **2.3 Multilevel Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

From the three perspectives of research into the factors encouraging knowledge sharing behaviour as demonstrated in Table 2.2, three levels of knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations are identified, individual, team and organizational levels

**Table 2. 2** Key research on social factors encouraging collective knowledge sharing behaviour

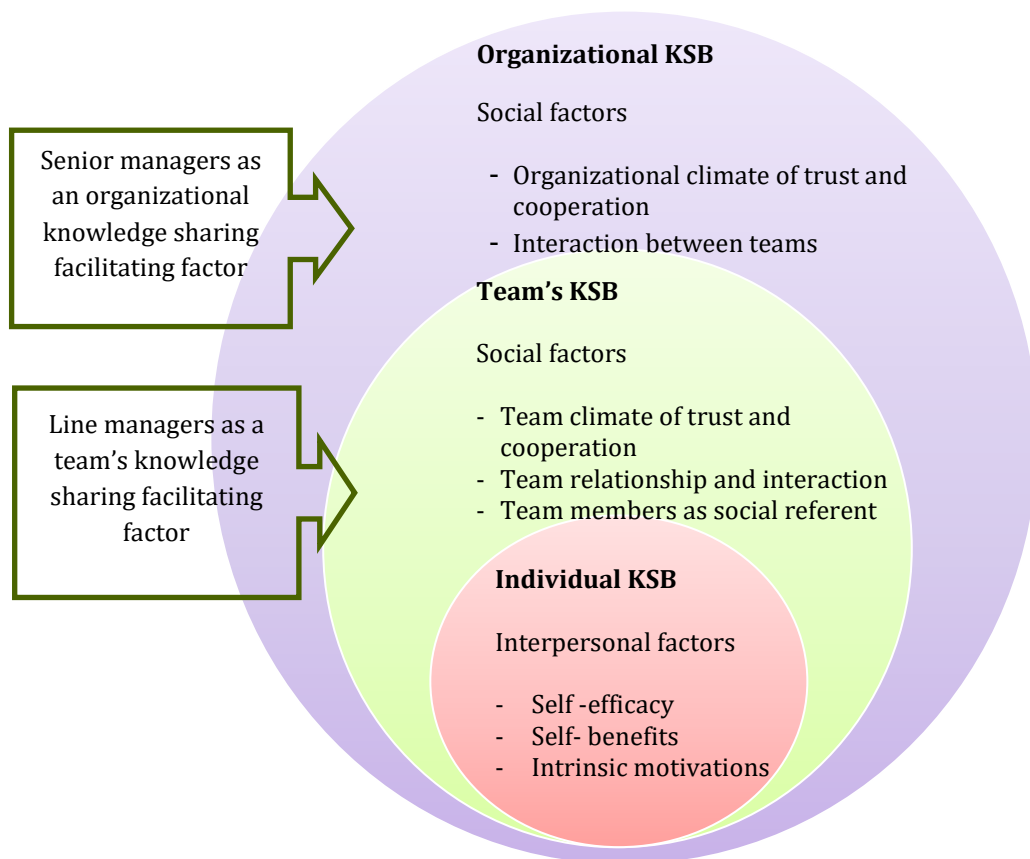
Authors	Focus /Level of study	Methodology	Informants
Constant et al. (1994)	Information sharing in technical context (Individual level)	Experiment with 485 undergraduate business school students	Students as employees
De Long and Fahey (2000)	Organizational culture and knowledge sharing (Organizational level)	Theoretical framework	None
Zhugue (2002)	The effective knowledge sharing in cooperative teams (Team level)	Survey of IT companies	Management and team members
Wu et al. (2007)	Factors of knowledge sharing within teams (Team level)	Survey of travel agencies	Team leaders and members
Casimir et al. (2012)	The influence of the perceived cost of sharing knowledge and affective trust in colleagues within teams (Team level)	Survey of 15 knowledge intensive companies	Employees
Mueller (2012)	Knowledge sharing between project teams (Team level)	Case study of engineering companies through interview, observation, company data, and group discussion	Team leaders and team members
Abdul-Jalal et al. (2013)	Employees knowledge sharing behaviour and competitive advantage (Individual level)	Survey of Malaysian knowledge intensive companies	270 workers
Boh and Wong (2013)	Organizational knowledge sharing climate (Organizational level)	Survey of five subsidiaries of an organization	Employees
Connelly et al. (2014)	Individual characteristic and knowledge sharing behaviour (Individual level)	Survey of 403 students	Students as employees
Lee et al. (2015)	Role of team and co-workers as facilitators in encouraging individuals to share knowledge within teams (Team level)	Survey	Employees
Wu and Lee (2016)	Factors which promoting group's knowledge sharing (Team level)	Survey of 86 work groups in the high-tech industry in Taiwan	Employees

These three levels are influenced by a variety of factors including interpersonal, social and management facilitators, as shown in Figure 2.1 (multilevel knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization). Knowledge sharing within an organization involves synergy between individuals, teams and management at a micro and macro level. Individuals engage interpersonal factors, such as self-efficacy, self-benefit and intrinsic motivation, to exhibit their knowledge sharing behaviour individually. As individuals are parts of teams (Llopis-Corcoles,2011),



their knowledge sharing behaviours are influenced by social factors such as team members, team trust, relationships and interactions, and the team’s cooperative climate. Social factors reinforce interpersonal factors in influencing individuals sharing their knowledge within a team with the support of line managers at team level (MacNeil, 2003, 2004; Llopis and Foss, 2016). However, individuals are more willing to share their knowledge within their teams rather than outside their teams (Zhuge, 2002). Therefore, senior managers are in the position to promote social factors which influence knowledge sharing across the entire organization such as an organizational climate of trust and cooperation, and organizational relationships and interactions (Hsu, 2006; Fey and Furu, 2008; Lin and Lee, 2004).

**Figure 2.1** Multilevel knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization



**Source:** Developed by the researcher, 2016

Clearly, knowledge sharing within an organization is hierarchical and exists at more than one level (Wang and Noe, 2010; Kozlowski et al., 2013). Therefore, capturing the complexity of knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization needs a

multilevel investigation (as discussed in Chapter 3: Research Methodology) (Klein and Kozlowski, 2000; Wang and Noe, 2010). However, the majority of previous studies on knowledge sharing behaviour are dominated by single-level investigations, either at the individual, team or organizational levels (see Table 2.2). There are limited multilevel studies on knowledge sharing behaviour (for example, Foss et al., 2010; Llopis, 2011). Therefore, multilevel investigation is needed to explore such complex and hierarchical knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations (Wang and Noe, 2010).

The next section explores how HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour in organizations.

The previous part discussed the literature on knowledge sharing behaviour and revealed a hierarchy of knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations (as shown in Figure 2.1). This part undertakes an in-depth analysis of the literature and develops a conceptual framework of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour.

### **2.4 The Relationship between HRM and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

It has been noted that the fundamental role of HRM practice is to facilitate employees' abilities, motivations and opportunities to perform (Boxall and Purcell, 2011, p.5). Social capital researchers such as Aklamanu et al. (2016) suggest that HRM policies and practices are key sources that organizations can use to enhance employees' knowledge, attitudes and skills. As a result, facilitating employees' knowledge sharing behaviour might be associated with HRM practices (Zalk et al., 2011). Previous studies (e.g. Aklamanu et al., 2016; Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Fong et al., 2011) employ various approaches to HRM research. In doing so, these studies reveal the roles HRM practices have in knowledge sharing factors and antecedents. For example, the theoretical study of Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) focuses on socio-psychological antecedents of knowledge sharing and people management practices. Gagne (2009) applies psychological theory and the motivational mechanism to create a motivational model of knowledge sharing behaviour, revealing five HRM practices, including staffing, job design, performance appraisals and compensation systems, and managerial style and training, that influence the psychological factors (attitudes, need satisfaction, and sharing norms) of knowledge sharing behaviour.

Currie and Kerrin (2003) point out that not all HRM practices facilitate knowledge sharing. This leads some researchers (Salis and Williams, 2008; Foss et al., 2009; Sajava, 2014; Llopis and Foss, 2016) to investigate a particular HRM practice which they believe effectively fosters knowledge sharing behaviour. For example, Sajeva (2014) believes rewards to be an effective tool used to encourage knowledge sharing behaviour among employees. Thus Sajeva (2014) selects only this single

HRM practice, and examines how it encourages knowledge sharing among employees. Meanwhile, Foss et al. (2009) point out that job design is an antecedent of actual knowledge sharing behaviour and therefore might be an important variable for a company looking to benefit from their employees sharing important knowledge.

There are a few researchers (e.g. Iqbal, 2015; Foss et al., 2015) who argue that a combination of HRM practices is more effective than a single HRM practice. This view is reinforced by wider evidence of the mutuality of HRM practices evident in the broader HRM literature, which claims that HRM practices work in '*tandem and not isolation*' (Foss et al., 2015, p.970). To emphasize this claim, Foss et al. (2015) propose that rewards might be ambiguous and difficult to interpret, but such ambiguity might be decreased if rewards are combined with other aligned HRM practices such as job design and work climate. Therefore, they examine the internal fit between HRM practices, including rewards, job design and working climate and their influence on employee motivation to knowledge share (Foss et al., 2015).

There are some researchers (Collins and Smith, 2006; Camelo-Ordez et al., 2011; Minbaeva et al., 2012) who focus on versions of HRM, such as soft and hard versions, rather than selecting a particular HRM practice, to understand the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. Researchers (Collins and Smith, 2006; Camelo-Ordez et al., 2011; Chiang and Chuang, 2011), who advocate a soft version of HRM, focus on a high level of managerial commitment to employees, the employees' psychological contract (trust), and commitment to knowledge sharing behaviour, particularly organizational social climate conditions for knowledge sharing. On the other hand, a hard version of HRM focuses on the importance of strategic fit, where HRM policies and practices are closely aligned to the strategic objectives of the organization (Bailey et al, 1997). For example, a micro foundation study (Minbaeva et al., 2012), which is the lowest level of the multilevel HRM study, examines the links between HRM and overall firm performance through individual-level mechanisms (ability, motivation and opportunity). This approach highlights that there is no specific bundle of HRM practices which influence knowledge-based performance, but rather it is the strength of the whole HRM system. The strength of

a whole system of HRM practices works as a communication mechanism (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004) to influence the antecedents of individual ability, motivation and opportunity for knowledge sharing behaviour, and eventually affecting the overall organization performances.

Furthermore, the studies focusing on a model of HRM best practice and organizational performance (Theriou and Chazoglou, 2014; Donate et al, 2015), also suggest that the best practice approach can enhance employees' skills and encourage productive performance. This encourages employees to be willing to create, share their knowledge within organizations and, therefore, organizations which employ a best practice HRM approach encourage knowledge sharing behaviour (Theriou and Chazoglou, 2014). However, the best-fit school argues for an approach to HRM that is fully integrated with the specific organizational and environment context in which they operate (Boxall and Purcell, 2016). Therefore, there is a need to explore the relationship between HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in different organizational contexts, such as knowledge-intensive and labour-intensive companies (Wang and Noe, 2010).

Another people management approach which may possibly foster knowledge sharing behaviour is employee voice (McCabe & Lewin, 1992; Nastiezaie and Kuhdasht, 2017). Employee voice is any mechanism or practice that provides employees with opportunities to communicate their opinions and participate in decision making within their organizations (Lavelle et al, 2010). It contains two main elements, including participation and involvement (Boxall and Purcell, 2016). The term 'involvement' refers to the management allowing employees to discuss with the issues that affect them. It is one of the approaches usefully applied to management initiatives which are designed to further the flow of communication as a means of enhancing the organizational commitment of employees (Williams and Adam-Smith, 2006). This organizational commitment affects POS and this, in turn, fosters knowledge sharing behaviour (Chiang et al., 2011). This enhances employees' positive attitudes towards work and may result in knowledge sharing for job performance improvement (McCabe and Lewin, 1992).

Another people management approach related to knowledge sharing behaviour is employment relations (Liao et al, 2004). In the employment relations approach the focus is on establishing organizational trust and commitment of employees (Lewis et al., 2003). These are recognized as essential elements of social capital influencing knowledge sharing behaviour (Bakker et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2007; Casimir et al., 2012; Wu and Lee, 2016).

It can be seen that there are various HRM approaches associated with facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour, such as individual HRM practices, a combination of HRM practices, a soft approach to HRM, micro foundation study, employee voice and employment relationship employed to investigate the role of HRM practices in knowledge sharing behaviour. Some studies begin with identifying factors of knowledge sharing behaviour, then exploring which HRM practices influence those factors (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Liu and Liu, 2011). Other studies begin by selecting a particular HRM practice expected to be effective for promoting knowledge sharing conditions (both individual and social) then examining whether those practices affect knowledge sharing behaviour (Foss et al., 2009; Sajeve, 2014; Fong et al., 2011; Chiang et al., 2011). However, these studies focus on two main factors associated with knowledge sharing, the interpersonal and social factors discussed below.

#### **2.4.1 HRM Practice and Interpersonal Factors of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

The literature on knowledge sharing behaviour (Kim and Lee, 2013; Mueller, 2012) notes that individuals share their knowledge because they are influenced by interpersonal factors such as self-efficacy, self-benefit and intrinsic motivations such as responsibility and job orientation (Kim and Lee, 2013). Therefore, HRM researchers (Lin, 2007; Aliakbar, 2012; Wee, 2012; Abdul-Jalal et al., 2013; Connell et al., 2014) tend to investigate the role of HRM in influencing interpersonal knowledge sharing factors.

## **HRM and Knowledge Sharing Ability**

It is widely accepted in the literature on knowledge self-efficacy (Wee, 2012; Abdul-Jalal et al., 2013; Connell et al., 2014) that an individual is more willing to share knowledge if they have a high level of perceived self-efficacy. The social learning theory of Bandura (1997) proposes that modelling, vicarious learning, role-playing, mastery and coaching are factors which enhance individuals' self-efficacy levels. This leads HRM researchers (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Fong et al., 2011; Aklamamu et al., 2016) to examine how HRM practices, specifically training and development practice, affect self-efficacy and the ability to share knowledge. For example, the theoretical study of Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) on people management and knowledge sharing behaviour reveals that extensive training and development programmes help develop an increased level of self-efficacy associated with knowledge sharing, as the individual feels more assured of their abilities and is more likely to share knowledge in the organization.

A recent study by Aklamamu et al. (2016) investigates the relationship between HRM practices and social capital influencing, post-global merger and acquisition (M&A), integration of team members. The study highlights how both formal training such as classroom training, and informal training such as one-on-one coaching and learning by doing, affects employees' knowledge, skills and ability to share knowledge. Aklamamu et al. (2016) reveal that a staffing strategy based on recommendations or referrals made by others and selection based on skill, expertise and competence also enhance individual knowledge sharing ability and skills. Furthermore, the study of Theriou and Chazoglou (2014) examines the relationship between best practice HRM, knowledge management and organizational learning and performance with 138 manufacturing companies. The findings highlight that HRM best practice, such as employment security, selective hiring, high levels of teamwork and decentralization, compensation and incentive contingent on performance, extensive training, employee involvement and internal communication arrangement, internal career opportunities, broadly defined job descriptions and harmonization, enhance employees' willingness to participate in knowledge sharing within organizations.

## **HRM Practice and Knowledge Sharing Motivation and Rewards**

Prior studies (Kim and Lee, 2013; Mueller, 2012; Sajeve, 2014) on knowledge sharing behaviour conclude that individuals share their knowledge because of psychological and intrinsic motivators, such as sense of achievement or success, job orientation (Kim and Lee, 2013) and responsibility (Mueller, 2012). Other HRM researchers (Foss et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2011) add that HRM practices can influence the intrinsic motivations for knowledge sharing. The quantitative investigation of Foss et al. (2009) examines how job design, including job autonomy, task identity and feedback, impact individual knowledge sharing behaviour. They collect data at the individual level using one-site sampling at the Copenhagen site of the German multinational company MAN Diesel. The findings reveal that different job designs foster different types of individual motivation in knowledge sharing. Job autonomy increases an employee's intrinsic motivation for knowledge sharing. Employees with autonomy in planning and performing their jobs have an increased sense of responsibility for work-related outcomes (Foss et al., 2009). This motivates them to share and collect knowledge. Task identity is associated with internal motivation for knowledge sharing, while feedback on the job, on the other hand, has a positive impact on employees' external motivation. However, from the managers' perspective, performance appraisal serves as an intrinsic motivator to enhance knowledge sharing behaviour (Fong et al., 2011). Similarly, McCabe and Lewin (1992) reviewed the dimensions of employee voice in non-union businesses in the United States. They highlight that autonomous work teams are one practice associated with participative management (a form of employee voice) which enhances employee attitudes towards work and knowledge sharing. This is because autonomous work teams reduce and eliminate conflict in the employment relationship (McCabe & Lewin, 1992).

Fong et al. (2011) investigate the relationship between HRM practices and knowledge sharing by collecting quantitative data from managers who implement HRM practices within Malaysian manufacturing and service industries. The results show that performance appraisal that provides staff with positive pressures and feedback might create a '*sense of accomplishment*' (p.717) and motivate them to



share knowledge in order to achieve a better performance. Similarly, Liu and Liu (2011) investigate HRM practice and individual knowledge sharing behaviour in high-tech companies in Taiwan. The study surveys 368 R&D professionals who typically believe sharing knowledge can enhance their performance. The findings highlight how HRM practices, specifically incentive compensation plans, performance appraisal systems and face-to-face communication, enhance knowledge sharing among R&D professionals through the mediation of perceived self-efficacy when employees receive fair feedback, which is necessary for them to evaluate their self-efficacy and improve their performance. On the other hand, these practices might negatively influence knowledge sharing behaviour if employees perceive they are being controlled, and subsequently they retain their information and feedback (Liu and Liu, 2011).

The study of Lam and Lambermont-Ford (2010) compares the extrinsic motivations for knowledge sharing behaviour in a professional bureaucracy, a standardized and decentralized organization, and an operating adhocracy, an adaptable organization. In a professional bureaucracy, knowledge sharing is shown to occur through extrinsic incentives, such as training and career progression. While in an operating adhocracy (where interdependent teamwork is important) knowledge sharing behaviour is influenced by the incentive of socialization. The study shows that extrinsic motivators which align with the individuals' hedonic or pleasure motivations (such as training and career progression) may foster knowledge sharing behaviour. On the other hand, extrinsic financial motivators do not appear to be relevant to knowledge sharing behaviour in either type of organization (Lam and Lambermont-Ford, 2010).

Similarly, in the Australian Film industry, the study of Alony et al. (2007) shows employee knowledge sharing behaviour not to be motivated by financial reward. This is supported by the doctoral study of Iqbal (2015) on employees' perceptions of HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour. The 390 questionnaires from 19 organizations in Pakistan show that monetary rewards are independent of knowledge sharing behaviour, but instead selection, collaborative practices and trust directly affect employees' knowledge sharing behaviour. To emphasize this

point, Minbaeva and Pedersen (2010) employ a micro-foundations approach, which is grounded in individual action, to examine individual knowledge sharing behaviour. They collect individual-level data from two companies, and the findings indicate that rewards, in particular monetary rewards, impact negatively on attitudes toward knowledge sharing behaviour, rather perceived organizational support encourages employee willingness to share and donate their knowledge (Lin, 2007). This is supported by the work of Fong et al. (2011) (as mentioned above) that compensation and reward are independent of knowledge sharing motivation and behaviour, from the manager's point of view (Fong et al., 2011). However, compensation and reward do positively connect to the management's intention of encouraging employees to share knowledge in Taiwanese companies (Lin and Lee, 2004).

Foss et al. (2015) argue that rewards might be ambiguous and difficult to interpret, however such ambiguity might be decreased if rewards are combined with other aligned HRM practices such as job design and work climate. Therefore, Foss et al. (2015) examine the internal fit among HRM practices such as rewards, job design and working climate in influencing employee motivation to share knowledge. By collecting data from 1,523 employees in five knowledge intensive companies, they find that employees exposed to knowledge sharing rewards exhibit higher levels of autonomous motivation to share when they are simultaneously exposed to a non-controlling job design and a work climate which supports knowledge sharing. This means rewards can motive individual knowledge sharing behaviour more effectively when combined with a supportive knowledge sharing climate (Foss et al., 2015). This is consistent with a micro-foundation study by Minbaeva et al. (2012) which examines the links between HRM and overall firm performance through individual-level mechanisms. By analysing data collected from 811 employees in three Danish multinational corporations (MNCs), the study reveals that employees' perceptions of organizational support and their extrinsic motivation directly influence knowledge sharing across groups of employees and this, in turn, enhances overall firm performance.

It can be seen that HRM practices can foster interpersonal factors of knowledge sharing behaviour at the individual level. HRM practices such as training and development enhance levels of self-efficacy for knowledge sharing (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Aklamamu et al., 2016). Referral-based selection and selection based on skill, expertise and competence also enhance individual knowledge sharing ability (Aklamamu et al., 2016). Some HRM practices, such as job autonomy, task identity and positive feedback from performance appraisal, increase employees' sense of responsibility and accomplishment. This serves as intrinsic motivation to foster knowledge sharing for better work-related outcomes (Foss et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2011). In some instances, training programmes and career progression are considered extrinsic motivations for knowledge sharing in a professional bureaucracy, while socialization motivates knowledge sharing in which work interdependency is high (Lam and Lambermont-Ford, 2010). Although, extrinsic financial motivation, such as rewards and bonus pay, is itself independent of knowledge sharing behaviour (Lam and Lambermont-Ford, 2010; Alony, et al., 2007; Iqbal, 2015; Minbaeva and Pedersen, 2010), when extrinsic financial reward combines with a supportive knowledge sharing climate and engagement with social interaction, it more effectively motivates knowledge sharing behaviour (Foss et al., 2015), particularly knowledge sharing across groups or teams (Minbaeva et al., 2012).

As mentioned in Section 2.3 (Multilevel Knowledge Sharing Behaviour), individuals are parts of social systems, and their knowledge sharing behaviours are influenced not only by interpersonal factors but also by social factors (Llopis-Corcoles, 2011). Therefore, some HRM researchers (Iqbal et al., 2013; Donate et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2007; Aklamanu et al., 2016) explore the role of HRM practices in establishing the social factors associated with knowledge sharing. The next section discusses HRM practices and the social factors of knowledge sharing behaviour.

#### **2.4.2 HRM Practices and Social Factors of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

Previous literature (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Wu et al., 2007; Aklamanu et al., 2016) analyses HRM practice and knowledge sharing at a collective level (team and

organizational level) and suggests that HRM practices potentially build social factors which foster knowledge sharing behaviour at a collective level.

### **HRM Practices and Social Trust**

The literature on knowledge sharing behaviour (Wu et al., 2007; Casimir et al., 2012) proposes that trust introduces open communication (Wu et al., 2007), reduces costs and creates affective commitment to knowledge sharing within teams (Casimir et al., 2012) and between teams (Mueller; 2012). Therefore, some HRM researchers (Wu and Lee 2016; Pervaiz et al., 2016) investigate the relationship between HRM practices and social trust for knowledge sharing behaviour. For example, the work of Wu and Lee (2016) explores how organizations can establish a knowledge-sharing group in the high-tech industry in Taiwan. Collecting data from 86 work groups, the study shows the role of work design (such as social interaction and task interdependency) in influencing group social capital resources, which can lead to higher levels of knowledge sharing. Social interaction is positively associated with group trust, while task interdependency is related to both group trust and a supportive climate for knowledge sharing which enhances knowledge sharing at group level. The work of Aklamanu et al. (2016), as mentioned in Section 2.4.1 (HRM and Knowledge Sharing Ability), also reveals that referral-based selection allows an organization to select employees who already have knowledge of each other, share common values and therefore trust each other. This enhances the level of knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations.

Pervaiz et al. (2016) investigate the factors contributing to knowledge sharing within an organization by examining how HRM practice affects knowledge sharing. Their study is based on data from management teams and operational employees in service organizations in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The findings show that HRM practices, specifically effective training techniques, fair compensation and performance appraisals, create a social climate of trust, which increases levels of knowledge sharing among employees within organizations. This is similar to the work of Collins and Smith (2006), who believe that a combination of HRM practices is more effective than a single HRM practice. They combine commitment-based

HRM practices (selection based on fit to the groups or organizations, organization-based incentives, training programmes, performance appraisals based on long-term growth and team building) to investigate how they affect the organizational social climate and the conditions for knowledge sharing. They interviewed HRM managers and CEOs and surveyed employees of 136 technology companies in the USA. The study shows that commitment-based HRM practices establish organizational social climates of trust and cooperation, with shared codes and language to exchange and combine knowledge.

### **HRM Practices and Social Relationships and Interaction**

There are HRM researchers (Iqbal et al., 2013; Donate et al., 2016) who highlight the way collaborative HRM practices establish networks of relationships and the interaction necessary for knowledge sharing behaviour. To demonstrate this point, Iqbal et al. (2013) examine the effect of specific HRM practices on knowledge sharing behaviour among employees. They conduct quantitative research in knowledge intensive firms and highlight the way collaborative HRM practices, such as teamwork, have a direct effect on employees' knowledge sharing behaviour. Iqbal et al. (2013) explain that collaborative HRM practices provide employees with opportunities to engage in face-to-face interaction and work together informally and formally for common goals in the organization. Therefore, collaborative HRM practices help employees interact and discuss their experience and knowledge. Similarly, Donate et al. (2016) examines the relationship between HRM practices, human and social capital development in technological companies in Spain. The analysis of data collected from 72 companies with more than 25 employees shows that the companies using collaborative HRM practices, such as employee autonomy, broad job design, flexible working arrangements, teamwork and group incentives, have a higher level of social capital. This capital eliminates barriers and allows employees to interact and build networks of relationships and, in turn, encourages collaboration and facilitates information flow, knowledge creation and accumulation. The study of Lado and Wilson (1994) on HRM systems and competitive advantage also suggests that HRM systems emphasise socialization enabling new employees to learn about the tacit knowledge and capabilities that

are deeply embedded in the organization's systems, routines, and culture. The socialization process allows for the discovery and exchange of tacit personal knowledge between newly hired employees and existing employees (Lado and Wilson, 1994).

As identified previously, Cabrera and Cabrera (2005) employ socio-psychological theory to explore how people management facilitates knowledge sharing behaviour. The study indicates the role of training in team building is to increase the level of relational social capital necessary for knowledge sharing. Team-based training helps build the team relationships that are important for knowledge sharing, and cross-training programmes increase interaction, creating a common language and building social ties. This facilitates knowledge sharing between teams and units. The case study of Mueller (2012) on knowledge sharing between project teams in an engineering consultancy in Austria supports the argument that knowledge sharing takes place between teams when employees rotate from one team to another based on their skills and documents such as team reports.

Other literature suggests effective HRM practices which can foster knowledge sharing behaviour for the enhancement of employee performance (Salis and William, 2008). Salis and William (2008) investigate the relationships between HRM practices and face-to-face communication (FTFC) and interaction in enhancing labour productivity. They conducted research into 500 British trading organizations with high profits and labour productivity. The study reveals a positive association between productivity, FTFC and interaction within social networks established through HRM practices, specifically problem-solving groups, teams, meetings made up of senior managers and employees, and meetings of line managers and employees. These HRM practices are evidence of purposive knowledge sharing opportunities designed to enhance labour productivity (Salis and William, 2008).

### **HRM Practice, Perceived Organizational Support and Knowledge Sharing**

The previous sections (2.4 and 2.5) explored HRM practice in fostering the interpersonal and social factors of knowledge sharing behaviour. Some literature

(Kim and Ko, 2014; Chiang et al., 2011) argues that HRM might not be effective in affecting knowledge sharing behaviour when employees perceive being controlled or unsupported by the organization. The study on employee voice and knowledge sharing behaviour by Nastiezaie and Kuhdasht (2017) supports the argument that employees' perceptions of being controlled and under-valued limits their voices. They are unlikely to voice and share their ideas and knowledge with their managers in such situations (Nastiezaie and Kuhdasht, 2017). Similarly, Kim and Ko (2014) investigate individuals' perceptions of how HRM affects their knowledge sharing behaviour. The study was conducted in the US public sector and used quantitative methods to investigate the relationship between individuals' perceptions of HRM practice (selection, compensation and reward, performance appraisal, and training and development) and knowledge sharing behaviour. The findings show that HRM practices promote employees' knowledge sharing behaviour when those practices make employees feel valued by the organization and there is perceived organizational support (POS).

The study of Chiang et al. (2011) argue that HRM practices indirectly foster knowledge sharing behaviour. Chiang et al. (2011) investigate the role of HRM in fostering long term knowledge sharing behaviour by focusing on high-commitment HRM, such as selective staffing, comprehensive training and development, developmental appraisal and competitive and equitable compensation. They question people on executive MBA programmes in a university in Taiwan as they believe that those informants would have a deep understanding of HRM practices. The study reveals that high-commitment HRM practices indirectly affect knowledge sharing behaviour. Chiang et al. (2011) note that high-commitment HRM practices directly affect organizational commitment and this affects POS which in turn fosters individual knowledge sharing behaviour.

It can be seen that the studies of HRM fostering collective knowledge sharing behaviour reveal that HRM practices help build the social capital elements of knowledge sharing such as social trust, social relationships and interaction. For example, commitment-based HRM practice such as referral-based selection (Aklamanu et al., 2016), effective training techniques, fair compensation and

performance appraisals (Pervaiz et al., 2016), and selective staffing (Collins and Smith, 2006) all create a social climate of trust, which increase levels of knowledge sharing among employees within an organization. In addition, collaborative HRM practices such as teamwork (Iqbal et al., 2013), job autonomy, broad job design, flexible working arrangements, teamwork, group incentives (Mueller, 2012; Donate et al., 2016), team-based and cross-training programmes (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005), and meetings (Salis and William, 2008) establish networks of relationships and the interactions necessary for knowledge sharing.

The previous literature advances our understanding of how HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour by enhancing individual self-efficacy for sharing knowledge (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Aklamamu et al., 2016); increase employees' sense of responsibility and accomplishment or intrinsic motivation for sharing knowledge (Foss et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2011); help establish the social capital elements necessary for knowledge sharing such as social trust (Wu and Lee, 2016; Pervaiz et al., 2016) which then introduces open communication (Wu et al., 2007), reduces costs and creates affective commitment to knowledge sharing within teams (Casimir et al., 2012) and between teams (Mueller, 2012). In addition, HRM practices help create social relationships and interactions which facilitate a collaborative climate and opportunities for knowledge sharing (Iqbal et al., 2013; Donate et al., 2016; Salis and William, 2008; Mueller, 2012). HRM practices are more effective when they help employees to engage with the organization and show employees are supported by the organization (Chiang et al., 2011; Kim and Ko, 2014).

The existing knowledge of HRM fostering knowledge sharing is predominately generated by research undertaken at a single level of HRM and knowledge sharing performance at either a micro or macro level (see Table 2.3).



**Table 2.3** Key research on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour

Authors	Article title	Level of investigation	Method	Informants
Mccabe and Lewin (1992)	Employee Voice: Human resource perspective	Organizational-level	Survey	Unionized and non-union businesses in the USA
Lado and Wilson (1994)	HR system and competitive advantage : competency based-perspective	Organizational-level	Theoretical research	None
MacNeil (2003, 2004)	Line managers: facilitators of knowledge sharing in teams	Team knowledge sharing	Conceptual study	None
Foss et al. (2009)	Encouraging knowledge sharing among employees	Individual knowledge sharing behaviour	Survey	Employees of the German MNC
Chen and Huang (2009)	Strategic human resource practices and innovation performance	Organizational level	Survey	Employees
Liu and Liu (2011)	HRM practices and individual knowledge sharing behaviour	individual knowledge sharing	Survey	368 R&D professionals in hi-tech companies
Fong et al. (2011)	HRM practices and knowledge sharing	Organizational level	Questionnaire	Managers implementing HRM in Malaysian manufacturing and service industries
Minbaeva et al. (2012)	Strategic HRM in building micro-foundations of organizational knowledge-based performance	Multilevel, micro foundation	Survey	Employees of MNCs
Iqbal (2015)	Employees' perceptions of HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour	Employees' perceptions of HRM practices	Questionnaire	Employees from 19 organizations in in Pakistan
Wu and Lee (2016)	How to make a knowledge sharing group	A group knowledge sharing	Survey	86 work group team leaders and team members
Donate et al. (2016)	Enhancing employee creativity via individual skill development and team knowledge sharing	Organizational level	Survey	Employees
Pervaiz et al. (2016)	Human resource practices and knowledge sharing	Knowledge sharing within an organization	Survey	Management team and operational employees

This table shows that Micro-level research (Foss et al., 2009; Liu and Liu, 2011; Iqbal, 2015) focuses on how HRM practices can foster individuals' knowledge sharing performance and is more likely to investigate the interpersonal factors of knowledge sharing behaviour. On the other hand, macro-level research (Fong et al., 2011; Wu and Lee, 2016; Pervaiz et al., 2016) investigates how HRM practices affect collective knowledge sharing performance (at team, or organizational level) and focuses on the social factors necessary for knowledge sharing.

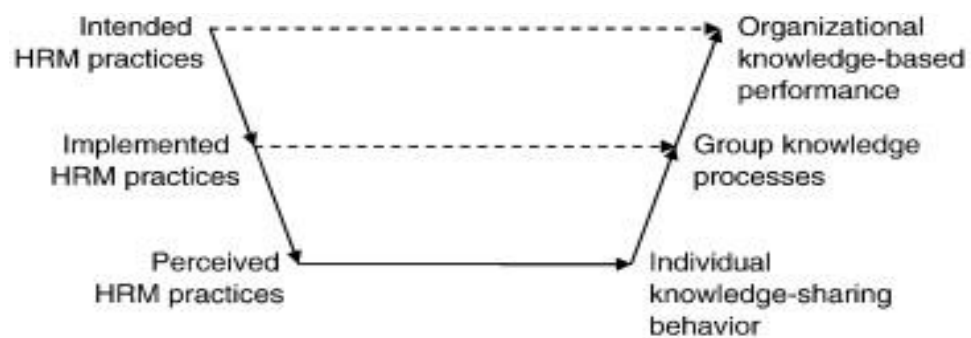
As shown in Figure 2.1, knowledge sharing phenomena are hierarchical and interdependent, with individual, team and organizational levels. Individual knowledge sharing behaviours are embedded in teams which are embedded in organizations, and organizational performance often emerges through the interaction and dynamics of individual behaviour (Wang and Noe, 2010). Knowledge sharing behaviour is primarily influenced by interpersonal factors, and social factors serve as a supplementary source (Lee et al., 2015; Boh and Wong, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016). Therefore, investigating a single level of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour is limited and does not provide a clear or complete view of how HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour across all levels, individual, team and organizational (Renkema et al., 2016).

Several studies (Wright and Nishii, 2007; Wang and Noe, 2010; Renkema, 2016) suggest that multilevel research is appropriate for exploring the complex phenomena of the relationship between HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour. The multilevel research approach is an integration of constructs from the various organizational levels (Renkema et al., 2016). It emerges from the fact that organizations are multilevel systems, and organizational entities exist in nested arrangements of individuals, groups and organizations (Klein and Kozlowski, 2000). Individuals are nested in work groups, which are nested in organizations (Makela et al., 2014). Multilevel HRM research is increasingly used, for many reasons. Firstly, an organization is a social construct made up of varying levels of social actors with different attitudes, behaviours and cognitions (Makela et al., 2014). As a result, managing people nested in an organizational structure can be different at the different organizational levels (Renkema et al., 2016). Secondly, the HRM construct is inherently multilevel as HRM practices are designed at firm level, implemented at unit level and perceived at individual level (Boxall and Purcell, 2016). This suggests that multilevel research in HRM is gradually increasing for examining HRM and performance relationships which exist within hierarchical structures (Renkema et al., 2016; Makela et al., 2014).

Multilevel researchers (Wright and Nishii, 2007; Kozlowski et al., 2013; Renkema et al., 2016; Sanders et al., 2014) suggest that a multilevel research approach

involves working with the perspectives of various actors within organizational hierarchies and can bring added insight for cross-level HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations. For example, Minbaeva (2013) employs multilevel logic to explain the relationships of HRM and organizational knowledge-based performance through individual-level behaviour, as shown in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2** Bridging macro and micro levels



**Source:** Minbaeva (2013)

Minbaeva (2013) proposes that intended HRM practice aligns directly to organizational strategy, and top management's intended HR strategies represent an important aspect of knowledge-related strategies which aim to enhance organizational knowledge performance. The intended HRM practices are implemented differently in different units within an organization due to their specific culture and climate, helping, in turn, to promote group knowledge sharing behaviour (Wright and Nishii, 2007). The HRM practices implemented are perceived and experienced by employees and their perceptions of HRM affect their behaviour and performance and contribute to collective knowledge performance at group and organizational levels respectively (Minbaeva, 2013).

Therefore, to gain a better understanding and nuanced explanation of how HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour are related at various levels in organizational hierarchies, this study applies a multilevel approach associated with various levels of inquiry to develop a conceptual framework of multilevel HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations, as discussed in the next section.

## **2.5 Conceptual Framework Development**

As part of the evaluation of the literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour, a research gap emerges which highlights the limitation of a single level investigation of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour. This study adopts the multilevel logic of relationships of HRM and organizational knowledge-based performance from Minbaeva (2013) in order to develop a conceptual framework. This includes the relationship between HRM and organizational, group and individual knowledge sharing behaviour.

### **2.5.1 Intended HRM Practice and Organizational Knowledge Performance**

It is noted that HRM strategy is aligned with business strategy at firm level by HRM managers and senior managers (MacNeil, 2003). However, it seems that no empirical study examines the intended HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour. The majority of literature investigates the role of HRM practice and organizational knowledge sharing behaviour (Fong et al., 2011; Wu and Lee, 2016; Pervaiz et al., 2016). These studies reveal the application and characteristics of HRM practices that may help organizations enhance employee's knowledge sharing behaviour. For example, Cabrera and Cabrera (2005), Gagne (2009) and Fong et al. (2011) suggest organizations select people who fit with the organization and have communication skills, because those employees are able to adjust to the work environment, in turn enhancing knowledge sharing among existing and new employees. Using referral-based selection allows organizations to select employees who have knowledge of each other and shared common values can enhance social trust and knowledge sharing within the organization (Aklamanu et al., 2016). Collaborative HRM practices, such as job rotation (Mueller, 2012), cross-training programmes (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005) and organizational meetings (Salis and William, 2008) establish networks of relationships and the interaction necessary for knowledge sharing. This fosters an organizational knowledge sharing climate in which employees are able to work closely and comfortably, and enhances knowledge sharing behaviour across the entire organization (Wee, 2012; Llopis and Foss, 2016).

Previous literature investigating HRM and organizational knowledge sharing behaviour is dominated by organizational actors at a single level, either employees (Donate et al., 2016; Minbaeva et al., 2012; Chen and Huang, 2009) or leaders and managers (Fong et al., 2011; Chuang et al., 2016; Pervaiz et al., 2016), and results are aggregated to provide evidence of organizational performance. It is argued by multilevel researchers (Kozlowski et al., 2013; Makela et al., 2014) that there are varying levels of social actors within an organization who have different attitudes, behaviours and cognitions (Wright and Nishii, 2007; Yang, 2004, 2009). Generally, research on HRM and related performance phenomena are influenced by heterogeneous perceptual and attitudinal factors at various levels of organizations (Makela et al., 2014). As a result, conducting research with a single level of informant is inadequate for a holistic analysis and cannot contribute to the contextual richness of HRM and related performance, including knowledge sharing performance (Wang and Noe, 2010). Data and information from organizational actors at various levels is required for a richer understanding of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization (Chiang et al., 2011; Kim and Ko, 2014).

### **2.5.2 Implemented HRM in Group Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

No literature uses the term 'implemented HRM', but previous studies (Wu and Lee, 2016; Mueller, 2012) investigate actual HRM practices affecting knowledge sharing behaviour at team level. These studies suggest that team-based HRM practices such as team work and task interdependency (Iqbal, 2015; Wu and Lee, 2016), team-based training and incentives, and team meetings (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005) establish social capital for knowledge sharing and promote a sharing climate within teams.

Studies at team level (e.g. MacNeil, 2004; Kim et al., 2015) highlight the role and importance of line managers in implementing HRM for knowledge sharing behaviour. The conceptual study of MacNeil (2003) points out that since line managers are positioned at the interface between the strategic intentions of senior management and the implementation level, they are responsible for putting

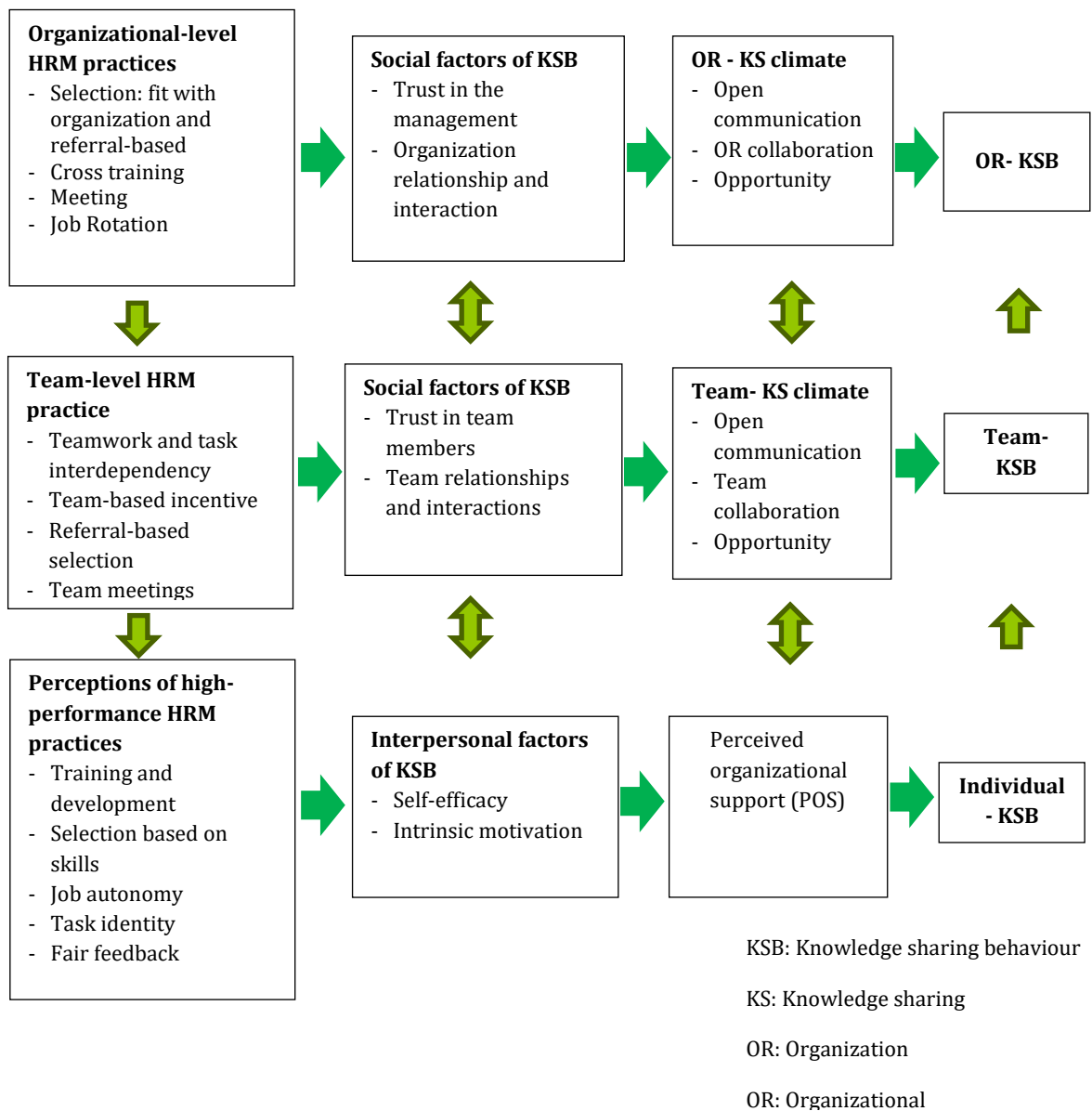
organizational and HRM strategies into practice. MacNeil (2004) notes that supervisors are important facilitators of knowledge sharing at team level. She explains that supervisors have delegated accountability for HRM activities, particularly in flatter organizational structures. Line managers are at the interface between top management and the team members and as such are in an '*important position to influence individual and collective tacit knowledge sharing in teams*' (MacNeil, 2004, p.99). However, the study of MacNeil (2004) is a conceptual study which needs an empirical study to explore this relationship.

### **2.5.3 Perceived HRM Practice and Individual Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

The literature on HRM and individual knowledge sharing behaviour (Kim and Ko, 2014; Liu and Liu, 2011) highlights that HRM might not be effective in affecting knowledge sharing behaviour when employees perceive being controlled or unsupported by the organization. The literature (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011) suggests that high-commitment HRM, such as selective staffing, comprehensive training and development, fair feedback, job autonomy and task identity, enhances perceived self-efficacy. Receiving fair feedback is necessary for employees to evaluate their self-efficacy and improve their performance, and this, in turn, affects POS and fosters individual knowledge sharing behaviour (Chiang et al., 2011). However, individuals are parts of social systems and their knowledge sharing behaviours are influenced not only by interpersonal factors but also by social factors (Llopis-Corcoles, 2011). Individuals are nested in work groups, which are nested in organizations (Makela et al., 2014). Therefore, further exploration of how individual knowledge sharing behaviour contributes to the outcomes of team and organizational knowledge sharing behaviour is required (Renkema et al., 2016).

The conceptual framework (Figure 2.3) is developed from the generic literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour. The literature review comprises theoretical and empirical research conducted mainly within knowledge intensive companies.

**Figure 2.3** Conceptual framework of HRM fostering knowledge sharing behaviour



**Source:** Developed by the researcher, 2016

Key sources (Wang and Noe, 2010; Kim et al., 2013; Donate et al., 2016) suggest that in order to achieve competitive advantage through knowledge sharing behaviour an organization should ensure their HRM practices increase individuals' perceived organizational support (POS), because POS is a primary factor encouraging individual knowledge sharing behaviour, while social factor serves as a supplementary determinant of collective knowledge sharing behaviour (Lee et al., 2015; Boh and Wong, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016).

The literature (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011) highlights how high-performance HRM practices, such as selective staffing, comprehensive training and development, fair feedback, job autonomy and task identity, all enhance the interpersonal factors associated with knowledge sharing (personal self-efficacy, sense of responsibility or accomplishment and intrinsic motivation). This, in turn, increases individual perceptions of organizational support (POS). Once, employees perceive these HRM practices supporting them to exhibit higher performance, they seem to become individually engaged with knowledge sharing behaviour (Foss et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2011).

The extant literature also indicates that team-level HRM practices including team work and task interdependency (Iqbal, 2015; Wu and Lee, 2016), team-based training and incentives, and team meetings (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005) establish the social capital elements of knowledge sharing, namely team trust and team relationships and interaction. These elements all promote a knowledge sharing climate (open communication, team collaboration and opportunity) within teams. This climate combines with POS at an individual level along with the support of line managers to encourage team knowledge sharing behaviour (MacNeil, 2003, 2004; Llopis and Foss, 2016).

Organizations can achieve competitive advantage through knowledge sharing practice if they can encourage knowledge sharing across and thorough the entire organization (Yang, 2004, 2009; Wee, 2012). The existing literature introduces HRM practices that foster knowledge sharing across entire organizations including selection that fits with the organization (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Gagne, 2009; Fong et al., 2011), referral-based selection (Aklamanu et al., 2016), cross-training activities (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005), organizational meetings (Salis and William, 2008) and job rotation (Mueller, 2012). These HRM practices help establish the social climate of trust and the networks of relationships and interaction necessary for knowledge sharing and, in turn, promote an organizational knowledge sharing climate in which employees are able to work closely and comfortably (Wee, 2012; Llopis and Foss, 2016). Again, this climate reinforces POS at an individual level and encourages employees to share knowledge across the entire organization. Senior



managers are important people in promoting knowledge sharing across entire organizations (Hsu, 2006; Fey and Furu, 2008; Lin and Lee, 2004).

The generic literature on the role of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour has advanced our understanding of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing at different levels within the organization (Liu and Liu, 2011; Foss et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2014, Minbaeva et al., 2010). However, these studies have been conducted in very different contexts with knowledge intensive companies, such as hi-tech companies, research and development organizations, consultancy companies and larger establishments (see Table 2.3) where knowledge and knowledge sharing are valued and used to enhance both individual and organizational performance. Therefore, they use high-performance HRM practices to support knowledge sharing behaviour at the individual level (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011). Team-based HRM practices, such as team work and task interdependency (Iqbal, 2015; Wu and Lee, 2016), team-based training and incentives, and team meetings (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005) are employed to encourage team knowledge sharing behaviour (MacNeil, 2003, 2004; Llopis and Foss, 2016). Furthermore, these knowledge intensive companies use referral-based selection (Aklamanu et al., 2016), cross-training activities (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005), organizational meetings (Salis and William, 2008) and job rotation (Mueller, 2012) to foster knowledge sharing across the entire organization.

There is, however, only a limited number of studies of labour-intensive companies, such as hotel businesses, which generally deploy a labour cost reduction strategy and use unsophisticated HRM practices (Hoque, 2000; Nickson, 2013). This strategy and practices are unlikely to generate organisational commitment (Davison et al, 2011), which is recognized as one of the most important factors associated with knowledge sharing behaviour (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011). However, knowledge management researchers (Bouncken and Pyo, 2002; Chen and Cheng, 2013; Kim and Lee, 2013) assert that effective knowledge management, particularly knowledge sharing, contributes to establishing competitive advantage and especially high service quality. Therefore, a specific exploration of how HRM can foster knowledge sharing in the hotel business is required in order to promote

knowledge sharing behaviour, enhance individual service quality and achieve competitive advantage. The next chapter discusses the literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry.

The previous sections have discussed and highlighted the growing body of literature on knowledge sharing behaviour, most of which is concerned with knowledge intensive organizations such as banks, financial firms, research and development organizations, consultancy companies and service businesses. These studies reveal the importance of increasing knowledge sharing to support firm performance, especially in the areas of knowledge and innovation. However, there are only a limited number of studies of the hotel sector. In this sector of industry, it is essential that employees at all levels regularly share their knowledge, typically operational knowledge, in order to improve the quality of service and promote customer satisfaction (Yang, 2009). Therefore, this part of the chapter explores the existing literature on knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry and how HRM can foster knowledge sharing in this business sector.

#### **2.6 Types of Knowledge in the Hotel Industry**

As mentioned, Polanyi (1958) distinguishes knowledge into explicit and tacit knowledge. Focusing on knowledge in the service industry, Bouncken (2002) introduces four categories of knowledge used in chain hotel organizations, task-specific knowledge, task-related knowledge, trans-active memory, and guest-related knowledge. Task-specific knowledge is considered tacit knowledge, which is embedded in employees' minds and the internalized service routines of hotels. It consists of the specific procedures, sequences, actions and strategies used to fulfil tasks. Although the details of task-specific knowledge can be articulated and codified in documents or databases, they need to be internalized through training and adoption into routine operation in order to increase service quality in hotels (Bouncken, 2002). This requires advice, training and activity to be transferred and shared. Task-related knowledge also involves individuals' shared knowledge, not of a specific task but of related tasks, which contribute to the team's ability to internalize similar working values and achieve a distinct level of quality in service operations. Task-related knowledge consists of shared values, norms and beliefs, cognitive consensus in the firm, and quality dimensions such as empathy, reliability

and assurance. Guest-related knowledge includes knowledge of what specific customers want, what specific customers of the hotel chain wish to have in the future, and what customers in the hotel's target group generally desire (Bouncken, 2002). Trans-active memory knowledge is understanding others' knowledge, preferences, weakness and work values (Bouncken, 2002). Trans-active memory knowledge refers to 'know-who' and concerns the common interrelations and connections between members. This type of knowledge does not presume a high level of knowledge sharing in hotels. Yang (2004, 2007, 2009), who studies knowledge sharing in international hotels in Taiwan, introduces two types of knowledge in the hotel industry: 1) job-related entities, including standard operating procedures (SOPs), competitor and customer knowledge, operational thoughts and behaviours; and 2) individual insights and experiences.

It can be seen that the knowledge types found in the hotel industry are associated with the classic type of knowledge explained by Polanyi (1958), as shown in Table 2.4. The literature (Bouncken, 2002; Witherspoon et al., 2013) suggests that both explicit and tacit knowledge are valuable resources for organizations trying to achieve or maintain competitive advantage. Yang (2009) asserts that, in order to improve organizational service quality, all types of knowledge from employees at all levels should be shared regularly. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the extent to which general knowledge, not a specific type of knowledge, is shared within organizations.

**Table 2.4** Types of knowledge used in the hotel industry

Type of knowledge	Explicit (open knowledge)	Tacit (intellectual capital and physical capabilities and skills)
Bouncken (2002)		
Task-specific knowledge	Standard Operating procedures (SOPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- specific procedures</li> <li>- sequences</li> <li>- actions</li> <li>- strategies to fulfil tasks</li> </ul>
Task-related knowledge		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- shared values</li> <li>- norms and beliefs</li> <li>- cognitive consensus in the firm</li> <li>- quality dimensions such as empathy, reliability and assurance</li> </ul>
Guest-related knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what a specific customer wants</li> <li>- what a specific customer of the hotel chain wishes to have in the future</li> <li>- what customers in the hotel's target group generally desire</li> </ul>	
Trans-active memory knowledge		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understanding others</li> <li>- knowledge preferences</li> <li>- weaknesses</li> <li>- work values</li> <li>- know-who</li> </ul>
Yang (2004, 2007, 2009)		
Job-related entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SOPs</li> <li>- Competitor and customer knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operational thoughts</li> <li>- Behaviours</li> </ul>
Individual insights		Experiences

## 2.7 Knowledge Sharing Behaviour and the Improvement of Service Quality

Knowledge management researchers (Bouncken and Pyo, 2002; Chen and Cheng, 2013; Kim and Lee, 2013) who conduct studies of the hotel industry point out that effective knowledge management, particularly knowledge sharing, contributes to establishing competitive advantage and especially high service quality. To reinforce this claim, Kim et al. (2013) suggest that the bigger hotels, for example the Marriott International Hotel chain and the Ritz-Carlton Hotel chain, require their staff to fill out a guest information card about every encounter with a guest. Such data and all guest requirements are stored and shared with staff when the customer returns. These activities mean that each customer is likely to receive a personalized service.

A case study by Bouncken (2002) explores knowledge management systems for quality improvement within the Accor Hotel Group, where knowledge management is a concern. The case study highlights how knowledge sharing can improve coordination and communication, which foster employees' knowledge and understanding, allowing all team members to perform the same job and service operations. As a result, the quality of service is improved. Bouncken (2002) concludes that hotel organizations can improve their service quality through knowledge sharing, which can: 1) enhance employee knowledge, particularly customer preferences; and 2) develop corresponding service procedures.

The nature of hotel operations is a complex work processes with a high degree of departmental interaction delivering high levels of customer service (Bouncken, 2002). This nature easily causes the conflicts between departments which O'Fallon and Rutherford (2011) suggest that effective coordination through knowledge sharing is essential in order to reduce those conflicts as well as facilitate the complexity of departmental interactions in hotel operations. This is incorporated with the work of Knox and Walsh (2005) which examines organizational flexibility and HRM in the hotel industry in Australia. The study employs a large-scale survey and multiple case studies of 14 hotels. The data from a survey, interviews, documentation and observations reveals that sharing knowledge across departments leads to an increase in employee knowledge and understanding of other departments' operations across each hotel. Consequently, this can promote a better coordination and reduce the conflict of work interdependence that can be a barrier to delivering high quality service (Jones and Lockwood, 1989).

Research using social capital and resource-based theories (Tang et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2015) reveals that knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between social capital (social ties, trust and shared vision) and improvement in service quality. The study of Kim et al. (2013) shows that social capital (structural, relational and cognitive capital) is a knowledge sharing enabler which influences knowledge sharing behaviour (including knowledge collection and donation) and has the effect of enhancing firm performance. The results of a survey of 486 employees in 14 five-star hotels in Korea confirm that social capital (social interaction ties, social trust,

and shared goals and vision) drives employee willingness to engage in knowledge sharing within firms. The study explains that, since knowledge sharing is considered '*sensitive behaviour*' (Kim et al., 2013, p.696), close interpersonal relationships are required to encourage knowledge sharing behaviour among employees. Once employees share their knowledge, that knowledge is transformed into organizational capabilities which benefit organizational performance (Kim et al., 2015). Similarly, Tang et al. (2015) investigate the effect of social capital on service innovation capability through knowledge sharing in international hotels. The study uses data from unit managers because, they believe, unit managers have more understanding of the social interaction within units. The findings of questionnaires from 147 unit managers from 67 international hotels in Taiwan reveal that knowledge sharing is a mediator of social capital which influences innovation in service capability. As such, knowledge sharing is a mechanism for transforming the innovation potential of social capital into actual innovation in hotel service capabilities (Tang et al., 2015). Bouncken and Pyo (2002) state that the sharing and reusing of the knowledge developed during routine operations can eliminate the cost and time of researching and developing knowledge, and competitors find it difficult to imitate this competitive advantage when the knowledge is based on internal team cooperation.

Previous literature indicates the role of knowledge sharing in improving the quality of service performance at various levels in organizational hierarchies (see Table 2.5). Sharing knowledge helps enhance individual knowledge, understanding and skills to deliver high quality service (Bouncken, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005). Sharing knowledge within teams or departments results in better coordination and communication, which allows all team members to deliver the same quality of service. This, in turn, enhances team performance (Bouncken, 2002; Bouncken and Pyo, 2002). When sharing knowledge between departments or across the entire organization, not only do employees gain new knowledge and understanding of other departments' operations (Knox and Walsh, 2005), but it also introduces a climate of work coordination in wider hotel operations. This helps reduce the conflict of work interdependence (Jones and Lockwood, 1989), and ultimately

organizational performance is improved (O'Fallon and Rutherford, 2011). Once employees share their (tacit) knowledge, that knowledge is transformed into organizational capability, which is of value to organizational performance improvement (Kim et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2015).

**Table 2. 5** Knowledge sharing behaviour and practice and hotel performance

Authors	methods	Participants	Findings
Bouncken (2002)	Case study: the Accor Hotel Group	Documentary and observation	Knowledge sharing can <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance employee knowledge and understanding</li> <li>- Develop team cooperation and result in delivering the same job and service operations</li> </ul>
Bouncken and Pyo (2002)	Theoretical study	Documentary	Knowledge sharing promotes internal team cooperation
Knox and Walsh (2005)	Mix method: survey and case study (interview, documentary and observation)	Survey with employees, interview with HRM managers, HODs, and selected employees	Sharing knowledge across departments can lead to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an increase in employee knowledge and understanding of other departments' operations across the hotel</li> <li>- reduce the conflict of work interdependence</li> </ul>
Kim et al. (2015)	Survey in five- star / international hotels in Korea	486 employees	Once employees share their knowledge, that knowledge is transformed into organizational capabilities which benefit organizational performance
Tang et al. (2015)	questionnaires of 67 international hotels in Taiwan	147 unit managers	Knowledge sharing is a mechanism for transforming the innovation potential of social capital into actual innovation in hotel service capabilities

Arguably, knowledge sharing is accepted as a potential managerial tool for achieving competitive advantage, particularly enhancing quality of service, and there are a number of studies which identify the factors effecting knowledge sharing behaviour, as discussed in the next section.



## **2.8 Factors of Knowledge Sharing Behaviour in the Hotel Sector**

The investigation of factors influencing knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry can be categorized into three, those focuses on the interpersonal, the team and organizational levels

### **2.8.1 Interpersonal Factors**

Research that focuses on interpersonal factors, for example Kim and Lee (2013), explores the complexity of the relationship between employee knowledge sharing behaviour, intrinsic motivation and service innovation. The study defines goal orientations, including learning and performance goal orientation, as intrinsic motivations and divides knowledge sharing behaviour into knowledge donation and knowledge collection. The findings of the quantitative research into 418 five-star hotel employees in one hotel in Korea, reveal that employees with high learning goal orientation are more likely to collect knowledge than donate their knowledge to others. Although both knowledge donation and collection are found to be positively connected to service innovation, hotel employees are more likely to collect knowledge than donate their knowledge to others. Interestingly, although it has been noted that the norm of knowledge sharing is one of interpersonal knowledge sharing antecedents, Stefano et al. (2014) claim that the norms of knowledge utilization are also key factors in the intention of knowledge sharing among gourmet chefs, for whom private knowledge is of value and importance to their reputation. The study of Stefano et al. (2014) of 500 Italian chefs in Michelin star restaurants reveals that reputed chefs are willing to share their knowledge if they find the knowledge recipients willing to comply with their norms of knowledge utilization.

### **2.8.2 Organizational Factors**

Some studies (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Freydouni, 2010) examine the relationship between interpersonal and organizational factors, revealing that organizational factors affect the interpersonal factor of knowledge sharing within organizations. To illustrate this, Chen and Cheng (2012) show that knowledge sharing is an

automatic behaviour influenced by both personal and organizational factors. They use questionnaires to investigate the motivational factors of knowledge sharing behaviour of front-line employees in international tourist hotels in Taiwan. The findings confirm that internal marketing (including internal communication, leadership, management support, inter-departmental interaction, training programmes and openness) and organizational culture (including trials of innovations, cooperation and trust, fairness, social networks, open-mindedness and participation) impact on attitudes to, and perceived behaviour in, knowledge sharing. On the other hand, the study of Yang (2009) investigates demographic factors which influence interpersonal factors and individual attitudes to learning and sharing knowledge, by analysing data from the top level to the front-line level of management in international hotels in Taiwan. The findings show employee demographics, such as age, gender, education level, tenure in industry and hotel, and the departmental environment do not significantly affect individual attitudes to learning or sharing either individual or organizational knowledge.

Freydouni (2010) identifies the barriers to knowledge sharing between employees, wider organizations and management in luxury hotels in Malaysia. The study interviews senior and middle managers and supervisors involved in managing knowledge and knowledge sharing practices in three international hotels, asking about experiences of knowledge sharing barriers. The findings reveal that work environment and personal factors (employee attitudes and ability in knowledge sharing) are barriers to knowledge sharing between employees and organizations. In the view of senior managers, social interaction, in particular face-to-face interaction is essential for promoting knowledge sharing behaviour as it helps build relationships and trust between employees and the organization.

### **2.8. 3 Team Factors**

Some studies (Hu et al., 2009; Molose and Ezeuduji, 2015) argue that teams are increasingly important in the service industry and team cultures are moderators of knowledge sharing behaviour and the quality of service performance. Hu et al. (2009) investigate the relationship between knowledge sharing behaviour and

team culture and how it influences innovation in service performance. The findings are derived from managers in international hotels in Taiwan, and indicate significant and strong relationships between and among knowledge sharing team cultures and innovation in service performance. Hu et al. (2009) conclude that team culture is a fundamental component of enabling the sharing of knowledge to drive service innovation within the hotel industry. Molose and Ezeuduji (2015) adopt Hu et al.'s (2009) concept of team cultures as moderators of knowledge sharing behaviour and the quality of service performance in their study of South Africa. The findings of the survey of employees in three international five-star hotels reveal a similarity to the work of Hu et al. (2009), that team culture plays a moderating role in promoting knowledge sharing in service innovation. The study points out that, although organizational culture affects employee knowledge sharing attitudes and behaviour, knowledge sharing behaviour might not be possible without quality relationships between team members (Molose and Ezeuduji, 2015). Therefore, they suggest hotels foster strong relationships between team members by providing social activities which foster a relaxed environment and enable knowledge sharing. Molose and Ezeuduji's (2015) suggestion is consistent with Yang (2004), that a strong knowledge sharing climate enables a greater degree of organizational effectiveness. Similarly, Hussain et al. (2016) examine the relationship between knowledge sharing behaviour, team culture and service innovation performance from the employee perspective in Malaysian luxury hotels. The findings are consistent with previous studies (Hu et al., 2009; Molose and Ezeuduji, 2015), showing that team culture and knowledge sharing behaviour have a significant effect on innovation in service performance.

Other studies (Freydouni, 2010; Chen and Cheng, 2012) highlight how organizational culture influences interpersonal factors (attitudes to and perceived control) of knowledge sharing behaviour. Some team-level investigations (Hu et al., 2009; Molose and Ezeuduji, 2015) emphasize team culture's moderating role in promoting knowledge sharing in service innovation. There is limited evidence of the most appropriate organizational or team culture to foster knowledge sharing behaviour. The study of Yang (2007) focuses on the effect collaborative culture has

on knowledge sharing in international hotels in Taiwan, including the Hyatt, Shangri-La, Westin, Four Seasons and Regent, Sheraton, Four Points by Sheraton, Nikko, Holiday Inn and General Hotel. The findings from top, mid and front-line level staff, reveal that work group collaboration and a collaborative climate, in particular spontaneous conversations with co-workers along with mentoring and facilitating leadership, foster employee willingness to share knowledge in work groups( Yang, 2007).

The investigation of factors encouraging knowledge sharing behaviour in hotels reveals three main types of factor associated with knowledge sharing behaviour, interpersonal factors, team factors and organizational factors (see Table 2.6)

**Table 2.6** Key research investigating knowledge sharing factors in the hotel industry

Authors	methods	Participants	Factors of knowledge sharing within hotels
Kim and Lee (2013)	Questionnaire survey	Employees in one five -star hotel in Korea	Interpersonal factor: goal orientation as intrinsic motivation
Stefano et al. (2014)	Questionnaire survey	500 Italian chefs in Michelin star restaurants	Interpersonal factor: norms of knowledge utilization
Chen and Cheng (2012)	Questionnaire survey	Front-line employees in international tourist hotels in Taiwan	Organizational factors and organizational culture impact on attitudes towards and perceived control in knowledge sharing behaviour
Freydouni (2010)	Interview	Senior and middle managers, and supervisors in international hotels in Malaysia	Work environment (social interaction) affects employee attitude and ability for knowledge sharing
Hu et al. (2009)	Interview	Managers in international hotels in Taiwan	Team culture
Molose and Ezeudji (2015)	Questionnaire survey	Employees in three international five-star hotels in South Africa	Team culture: relationship and interaction, relaxed environment
Yang (2007)	Survey	Top, mid, and front-line level staff in international hotels in Taiwan	Work group collaboration and a collaborative climate fosters employee willingness to share knowledge in the work group

The generic literature (Wang and Noe, 2010; Kim et al., 2013; Donate et al., 2016) consider interpersonal factors, particularly individuals perceived organizational support (POS), as a primary factor encouraging knowledge sharing behaviour, while social factor serves as a supplementary determinant of collective knowledge sharing behaviour (Lee et al., 2015; Boh and Wong, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016). Arguably, the literature specific to the hotel industry suggest that team factors such as team cultures are moderators of knowledge sharing behaviour and the quality of service performance (Hu et al., 2009; Molose and Ezeuduji, 2015). The literature (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Freydouni, 2010) identifies that organizational factors, such as effective communication, leadership, inter-departmental interaction and collaboration and a collaborative climate, help build relationships and trust among employees and organizations (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Freydouni, 2010). This, in turn, influences interpersonal knowledge sharing factors, including attitudes towards knowledge sharing behaviour (Yang, 2007; Chen and Cheng, 2012). In addition, employees with higher goal orientations, which is an intrinsic motivation for knowledge sharing, are more likely to share their knowledge and have higher performance (Kim and Lee, 2013). However, knowledge sharing behaviour might not be possible without a collaborative team climate or quality relationships between team members (Yang, 2007; Hu et al., 2009; Molose and Ezeuduji, 2015).

In summary, the previous literature on knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry is dominated by the investigation of the relationship between knowledge sharing behaviour and service innovation (Bouncken, 2002; Kim et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2015; Molose and Ezeuduji, 2015). Several studies (Yang, 2007, 2009; Chen and Cheng, 2012; Freydouni, 2010; Kim and Lee, 2013; Molose and Ezeuduji, 2015) identify the factors associated with knowledge sharing behaviour. It appears that there are only a limited number of studies (Mat et al., 2016) which directly examine the roles of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry as discussed in the following section.

## **2.9 The Relationship between HRM and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour in the Hotel Industry**

There are very few studies which directly investigate the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry. For example, the work of Mat et al. (2016) studies the relationship between HRM practices, knowledge sharing behaviours and organizational innovation. The findings from an online survey of 200 heads of department in four and five-star rated hotels in Malaysia reveal that HRM practices, specifically training and development and compensation, increase knowledge sharing activities (knowledge donation and collection) and, in turn, influence organizational innovation. Mat et al. (2016) explain that effective training and development programmes provide opportunities for employees to generate new ideas and understanding, which is useful for service innovation.

Some studies related to HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour (Bouncken, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005; Lastra et al., 2014) highlight the relationship between these two areas. For example, Bouncken (2002) studies knowledge management systems for quality improvement within Accor. The study not only advances the understanding of knowledge sharing in quality of service improvement, it also reveals some HRM practices being used to motivate knowledge use and generation. The Accor Hotel Group motivates employees to share and utilize knowledge using rewards and incentives, such as bonuses and idea contests. In addition, Accor improves service quality by improving employees' knowledge, focussing on training programmes, particularly in-service operations. One of the training techniques used is meetings between experts who can exchange both tacit and explicit knowledge (Bouncken, 2002).

HRM researchers (Knox and Walsh, 2005; Lastra et al., 2014) who investigate the relationship of functional flexibility in HRM and firm performance reveal that this approach to HRM fosters knowledge sharing within organizations. Functional flexibility in HRM is associated with the increasing of the range of tasks, which employees can undertake. Employers expect employees to be capable of working in various functions within or outside departments, and this practice can lead to an

increase in employees' skills, job satisfaction and meaningful work for employees (Nickson, 2013; Lastra et al., 2014). The work of Lowe (2002 cited in Nickson, 2013) in the Marriott Hotel in London examines how functional flexibility, such as cross-training and multi-skilled employees, affects hotel performance. The study discovers that these practices increase employee skills by providing opportunities to learn and share knowledge when working on various functions. This is similar to the study of Ubeda-Garcia et al. (2017) which explores HR flexibility in facilitating the development of organizational ambidexterity and firm performance in Spanish hotels. They use questionnaires to survey HRM managers from 100 three to five-star hotels in Spain. Their study reveals that functional flexibility in HRM, such as job rotation, provides opportunities to share and develop new knowledge and skills in the long term.

Knox and Walsh (2005) explore organizational flexibility in Austrian hotels, and HRM in the hotel industry in Australia, and highlight that the larger luxury hotels are adopting systematic employee management techniques and strengthening their internal labour market through functional flexibility initiatives. They designate employees to work flexibly across departments and create cross-training programmes and intensive reward schemes for employees who engage with these programmes. This not only provides formal opportunities for knowledge sharing behaviour across the organization but also motivates the practice (Knox and Walsh, 2005). This is in comparison to Guerrier and Lockwood (1989) point out however that flexible working in the hospitality industry in the UK, notably in SME establishments, could only be achieved with very similar functions, typically within departments, and it is very difficult to achieve between the front and back of house.

There seems to be a different emphasis in the generic and specific to the hotel industry literature on the role of functional flexibility in HRM practice facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour. The literature specific to the hotel industry highlights the use of functional flexibility in HRM practices to provide employees with opportunities to share and develop new knowledge and skills in order to improve service performance (Knox and Walsh, 2005; Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2017). In contrast, the generic literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour reveals

functional flexibility to be part of collaborative HRM practices which allow employees to interact and build networks of relationships, facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour (Donate et al., 2016).

The work of Yang (2004, 2009) on knowledge sharing behaviour in internationally managed five-star chain hotels in Taiwan shows that some HRM practices facilitate knowledge sharing behaviour, as shown in Table 2.7.

**Table 2.7** Comparison of Yang's studies of 2004 and 2009

Authors	Methodology	Levels of staffs	Types of Knowledge	Channels
Yang (2004)	Case study of international hotels (interviews with managers, rank and file staff, and front-line staff)	Front-line staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Product knowledge</li> <li>- Guest related information (complaints, how to deal with customers, special guest requests)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training techniques (case study, workshop, brain-storming session, seminar, role play, lecture, team discussion, organizational training session)</li> <li>- Meeting and internal shift briefing</li> <li>- Written materials conversation</li> <li>- Social activities</li> </ul>
		Rank and file staff	Work experience knowledge	
		Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Competitor situation</li> <li>- Operational routines</li> </ul>	
Yang (2009)	Survey of employees at all levels in international hotels	Operational and middle levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operational knowledge</li> <li>- product and service detail</li> <li>- customer related knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FTF communication during working hours</li> <li>- Involvement in mentoring and training programmes</li> </ul>
		Top level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic knowledge</li> <li>- Industry trends</li> <li>- Competitors' performance</li> </ul>	

Yang's qualitative work of 2004 explores the context and implementation of knowledge sharing in two five star chain hotels, and reveals that although these hotels have no formal knowledge sharing policies apart from their routine operations, knowledge sharing occurs during spontaneous situations such as informal social activities. These activities enable employees to '*feel freer and open in discussing*' some aspects of job related-knowledge during working time (Yang,



2004, p.125). In 2009, Yang studied individual attitudes to learning and sharing individual and organizational knowledge in international hotels in Taiwan. The findings are consistent with the work of 2004, that spontaneous face-to-face communication during working time is the preferred channel to share knowledge and informal social activities enable employees to feel more open in discussing job-related matters during working hours. In contrast, planned social interaction such as workshops, meetings and training programmes are not as strongly conducive to knowledge sharing.

The studies of Yang (2004, 2009) also reveal the interesting finding that different levels of employees have different perceptions of knowledge sharing behaviour. Top management perceive knowledge sharing as important and are more willing to share knowledge than front-line employees, while subordinates do not fully share their knowledge with colleagues or supervisors. Evidence emerges of how different knowledge is shared at different levels within the organizational hierarchy. Top managers mostly share strategic knowledge, while line managers share their work experience knowledge. At an operational level, employee operational knowledge and job-related knowledge is shared between employees. However, front-line staff, such as waiters, cashiers, receptionists and room attendants, share product knowledge and guest related information.

In conclusion, the literature related to HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry suggests some HRM practices, such as training and development programmes and functional flexibility (job rotation and cross-training) provide employees with opportunities to share their knowledge (Mat et al., 2016; Bouncken, 2002; Lowe, 2002; Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2017). Hotel chains use rewards, such as bonus incentives, to motivate employees' knowledge sharing behaviour (Knox and Walsh, 2005). Furthermore, informal social activities and face-to-face communication during operations enables employees to feel freer, more comfortable, and more open in discussing and sharing their knowledge (Yang, 2004, 2009), as shown in Table 2.8.

**Table 2.8** The role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in hotels

Authors	methods	Participants	HRM practices	Knowledge sharing	Service performance
Mat et al. (2016)	Questionnaire survey	200 HODs from five and four-star hotels in Malaysia	Training and development and compensation	Providing opportunities for employees to generate new ideas and understanding	New ideas and understanding are useful for service innovation
Bouncken (2002)	Case study	Managers at Accor hotels	Rewards and incentives	Motivating knowledge use and generation	Improving service quality
			Training programmes of meetings between experts	Improving employees' knowledge	
Lowe (2002 cited in Nickson, 2013)	Case study	Marriott Hotel in London	Cross-training and multi-skilled employees	Providing opportunities to learn and share knowledge working in various functions	Improving employees' skills
Ubeda-Garcia et al. (2017)	Questionnaire	HRM managers from three to five-star hotels in Spain	Job rotation	Providing opportunities to share knowledge	Developing new knowledge and skills in the long term
Knox and Walsh (2005)		Luxury hotels in Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work flexibility across departments</li> <li>- Cross-training programmes with intensive rewards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing formal opportunities for knowledge sharing across the organization</li> <li>- Motivating knowledge sharing</li> </ul>	Understanding other departments' operations and reducing the conflict of work interdependency
Yang (2004)	Case study	International hotels (interviews with managers, rank and file staff and front-line staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Informal social activities</li> <li>- Face-to-face communication</li> </ul>	Enabling employees to feel freer and more open in discussion	
Yang (2009)	Survey	Employees at all levels in international hotels			

Table 2.8 demonstrates that knowledge sharing behaviour is valued and important for hotel organizations in improving the quality of service performance in order to achieve competitive advantage (Bouncken, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005; Bouncken and Pyo, 2002). The literature reveals that HRM practices, such as training and development programmes, job rotation, bonus incentives, informal social activities and face-to-face communication, foster knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel sector. The way HRM practices are communicated to employees enables them to improve their knowledge and skills, and have better coordination and communication which allows all organizational members to perform the same job and provide the same level of service operation. Ultimately quality of service is improved (Bouncken and Pyo, 2002). However, previous studies (Bouncken, 2002; Yang, 2004, 2009; Kim et al., 2013) were undertaken within either international hotels or four and five-star hotels, show high performance and sophisticated approaches to HRM in this sector of the hotel industry (Nickson, 2013). It appears that no study has been undertaken of the SME boutique hotel sector, where competitive advantage is achieved via high quality personalized service (McIntosh, 2005; Aggett, 2007; Khosravi et al., 2014). It is important therefore to explore how HRM practices foster knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels in order to extend the knowledge of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel sector.

## **2.10 Limitations of the Literature on HRM and Knowledge Sharing Behaviour**

This thesis explores the literature in order to understand how hotel organizations can help employees share their knowledge and achieve the competitive advantage. Many studies (Hendriks, 1999; Wang and Noe, 2010) suggest the use of IT support and HRM to facilitate knowledge sharing within organizations. Although using IT can reduce barriers of time and space between employees and provide access to information, there are limitations, as it is not specified how the quality of knowledge sharing is to be improved (Hendriks, 1999). Knowledge sharing is a personal and interpersonal behaviour and can be part of an extremely complicated process (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Liu and Liu, 2011). The foundations of HRM practices are to facilitate employees' abilities, motivations and opportunities to perform as the

organization expects (Boxall and Purcell, 2011). This means employees' abilities, motivations and opportunities to share knowledge can all be developed by HRM and this may be more effective than using IT. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring the literature on the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within hotel organizations. In doing so, two main issues in the literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour are identified, the context of the research conducted and the level of analysis.

Firstly, it is clear that the majority of the studies in the literature have been conducted in a different context, with knowledge intensive companies in which knowledge and knowledge sharing are important and which are, therefore, more likely to use HRM practices in a formal way to encourage knowledge sharing behaviour (Pervaiz et al., 2016). There are limited studies conducted into hotel organizations, a labour-intensive industry (Nickson, 2013; Boella and Goss-Turner, 2013). Instead the literature focusing on the hotel industry (Bouncken, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005; Bouncken and Pyo, 2002; Kim et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2015) is based within the chain and larger hotel sector. These studies emphasize that knowledge sharing helps enhance the quality of service performance and HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour in hotels. This sector of the industry, similar to knowledge-intensive companies, typically uses sophisticated and formal HRM practices (Pervaiz et al., 2016; Nickson, 2013). There has been no study undertaken of the SME boutique hotel sector. It is recognized that HRM in this sector of the hotel industry is generally not formalized, and management tends to be unstructured. For example there is high reliance on the use of internal referrals and references, providing an informal and personal atmosphere, and open communication throughout organizations (Cooper and Burke, 2011; Nickson, 2013). This is because some formal HRM practices are not viable in the SME context, as illustrated by the study of HRM in SMEs in Ireland by Harney and Nolan (2015). They explain that SMEs are more likely to form work groups naturally and adopt direct employee involvement practices, such as employee discretion in carrying out work. Therefore, it may be strategically sensible not to adopt certain HRM practices in SMEs. However, many studies (McIntosh, 2005; Aggett, 2007; Khosravi et al., 2014)

suggest that the delivery of high quality personalized services enables SME boutique hotels to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. Therefore, a specific exploration, appropriate to SME boutique hotels' characteristics and environments, is required, in order to promote knowledge sharing behaviour, enhance individual service quality and achieve competitive advantage.

Secondly, both the generic and hotel specific literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour are dominated by investigations at one level, either the individual, team or organizational level. Focusing on the literature specific to hotels (see Table 2.8), the majority of studies investigate the ways organizational-level HRM affects individual knowledge sharing behaviour (Mat et al., 2016; Bouncken, 2002; Lowe, 2002; Ubada-Garcia et al., 2017; Knox and Walsh, 2005) and are undertaken at one level of organizational actor, mainly HR and senior managers, who understand and implement HRM practices to support knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations.

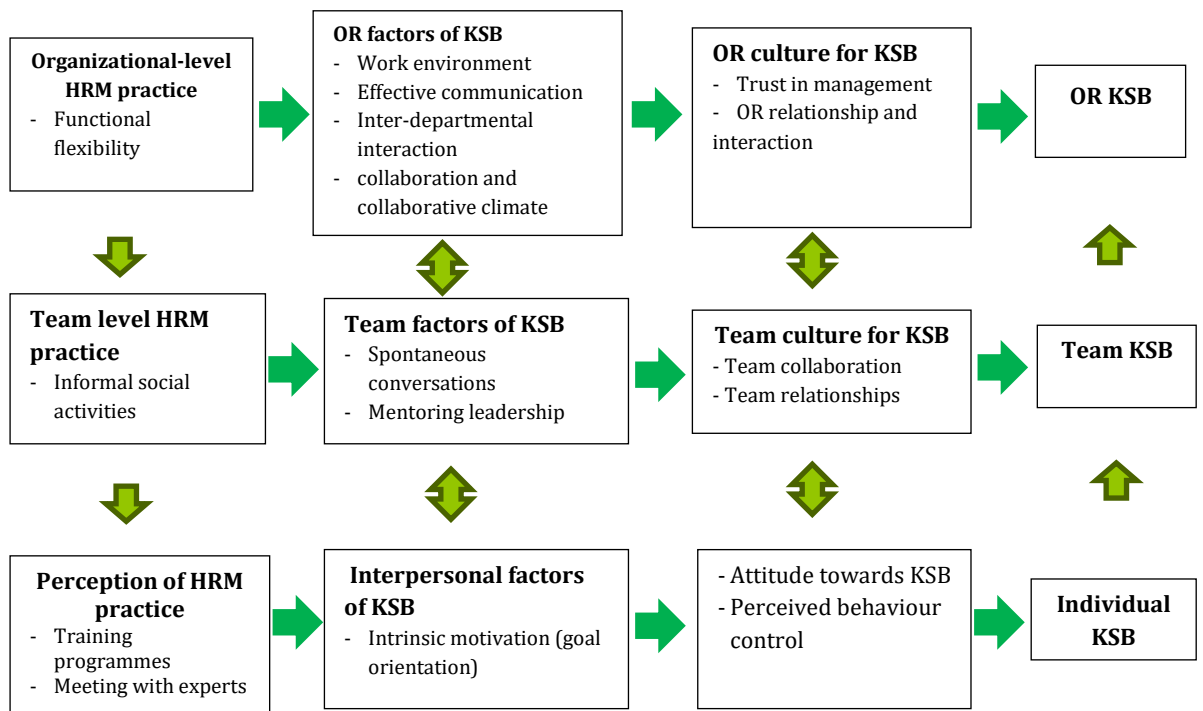
According to the evaluation of the literature, knowledge sharing phenomena are hierarchical and the individual, team and organizational levels are interdependent (Wang and Noe, 2010; Lee et al., 2015; Boh and Wong, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016). HRM and knowledge sharing within organizations depend on social interactions between the varying levels of social actors within the organizational hierarchy. Each has different perceptions and values (Wright and Nishii, 2007) and shares their knowledge differently (Yang, 2004, 2009). Therefore, investigating a single level of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour is limited and may reveal biased findings (Makela et al., 2014) or not provide a clear and complete view of how HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization (Renkema et al., 2016). Several studies (Wright and Nishii, 2007; Wang and Noe, 2010; Minbaeva, 2013; Renkema, 2016) suggest a multilevel analysis is needed to appropriately explore the complex phenomenon of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour within organizational hierarchies. Therefore, to fill the gaps in existing knowledge about the role of HRM practice in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour, the current study explores the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in SME

boutique hotels, and undertakes multilevel research in order to achieve the stated aim. A conceptual framework is developed and presented in the next section.

## 2.11 A Conceptual Framework

As previously discussed, one of the limitations of previous studies is that there is no literature relating to the SME boutique hotel sector. Therefore, the researcher combines the generic conceptual framework from Part 2 (Figure 2.3) and the findings from the exploration of the literature on the hotel industry, to form the conceptual framework of this study, shown in Figure 2.4.

**Figure 2.4** Conceptual framework of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels



KSB: Knowledge sharing behaviour

OR: Organizational

**Source:** Developed by the researcher, 2016

This conceptual framework shows the role of HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour within the hotel sector. Organizational HRM practices, such as functional flexibility (Lowe, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005; Lastra et al., 2014) help establish the organizational factors associated with knowledge sharing behaviour, such as effective communication, inter-departmental interaction, collaboration and a collaborative climate. These factors help build an organizational culture of knowledge sharing, specifically relationship and trust between employees and the organization (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Freydouni, 2010) which influences interpersonal knowledge sharing factors, specifically attitudes towards knowledge sharing behaviour (Yang, 2007; Chen and Cheng, 2012). Once employees perceive HRM as fulfilling their intrinsic motivation (goal orientation), they are more likely to share their knowledge for higher performance (Kim and Lee, 2013). However, knowledge sharing behaviour might not be possible if there is no team collaborative climate or quality relationships between team members, which are promoted by spontaneous conversations with co-workers along with mentoring and facilitating leadership (Yang, 2007; Hu et al., 2009; Molose and Ezeuduji, 2015). This conceptual framework is a combination of the generic conceptual framework from Part 2 (Figure 2.3) and the findings from the exploration of literature on the hotel industry. It does not provide rich evidence to fully explain the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels. Therefore, there is a need for an empirical study with multilevel analysis of the role of HRM practice in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels, using this conceptual framework as a guideline.

## **2.12 Chapter Summary**

This chapter is divided into three: the concept of knowledge and knowledge sharing behaviour; the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in the generic literature; and literature specific to the hotel industry.

The first part discusses the definitions of knowledge and knowledge sharing behaviour, and the factors which influence knowledge sharing behaviour. The literature reveals three main perspectives employed to investigate factors

encouraging knowledge sharing behaviour, micro, social and management perspectives. These three perspectives identify two main types of knowledge sharing factors, interpersonal and social factors (Mueller, 2012; Amayah, 2013; Wu et al., 2007; Yeo and Gold, 2016; Chiu et al., 2006). Interpersonal factors seem to be the primary factors, with social factors seen as supplementary (Boh and Wang, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016). The management perspective introduces the key facilitators encouraging employees to share their knowledge in organizations. They are senior managers with the authority to foster knowledge sharing across the entire organization, and line managers with the authority to promote and implement a knowledge sharing climate within their teams (MacNeil, 2003, 2004; Wang, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016). Evaluating the literature on the factors encouraging knowledge sharing behaviour, clarifies the levels of knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization, which are three levels of knowledge sharing, individual, team and organizational. These three levels are influenced by a variety of factors, including interpersonal, social and management factors, as shown in Figure 2.1.

The second part of the chapter discusses, in depth, the relationship between HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour in organizations. There are two main perspectives adopted to explore the role of HRM practices in knowledge sharing behaviour. The first is the micro perspective (Lin, 2007; Aliakbar, 2012; Wee, 2012; Abdul-Jalal et al., 2013; Connell et al., 2014). This perspective tends to see the role of HRM as influencing interpersonal or psychological knowledge sharing factors such as perceived self-efficacy, self-benefit and motivation to knowledge sharing behaviour. The second is the social perspective (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Wu et al., 2007; Aklamanu et al., 2016). This perspective holds that interpersonal factors alone cannot promote knowledge sharing at the collective level of the team or organization. Therefore, HRM and collective knowledge sharing behaviour are explored, revealing that HRM practices potentially establish social capital elements for sharing, including social trust, social interaction and relationships, and a social climate for knowledge sharing. The analysis of the generic literature advances our understanding of the role of HRM in fostering interpersonal factors of individual



knowledge sharing behaviour and helping to build the social capital element necessary for knowledge sharing at team and organizational level. Since knowledge sharing is hierarchical and exists at more than one level of organizational hierarchies, the second part of this chapter adopts a multilevel logic of relationships of HRM and organizational knowledge-based performance from Minbaeve (2013) in order to develop a conceptual framework of multilevel HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations. In doing so, a clearer understanding of how HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization is presented (see Figure 2.3). The limitations of the generic literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour are presented at the end the second part of the chapter.

The third part of the chapter discusses the importance of knowledge sharing behaviour and hotel performance. The literature highlights how knowledge sharing is one of the most important managerial tools for improving the service quality of individuals, teams and organizations (Bouncken, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005; Bouncken and Pyo, 2002; Kim et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2015). The three main types of factors associated with knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry are identified as personal, team and organizational factors. However, it appears that organizational and team factors influence personal factors. In addition, evaluation of the previous literature reveals very few studies exploring the relationship between HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry. The literature related to HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry suggests that HRM practices, such as training and development programmes, functional flexibility of HRM, rewards and bonus incentives, informal social activities and face-to-face communication during operation time, facilitate knowledge sharing in hotels (Yang, 2004, 2009; Mat et al., 2016; Bouncken, 2002; Lowe, 2002; Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2017). At the end of the chapter, the limitations of the previous studies and suggestions for further study are identified. A conceptual framework for the study is developed as a guideline for fieldwork and data analysis. The next chapter discusses the research philosophy and methodology.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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The previous chapter reviewed the literature on the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in general and in particular within the hotel sector. In the process, research gaps emerged which identify the need for an investigation of SME boutique hotels and the value of a multilevel approach to the exploration of the relationship between HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour. To ensure the study adopts a suitable methodology and contributes to the accepted knowledge, this chapter clarifies the philosophy and methodology used, in order to ensure it achieves the research aim and objectives. It begins with an explanation of the possible and chosen research philosophies and approaches. Next, the research methodology is identified. Methods of data collection and the pilot study are explained then the processes of data analysis are outlined. The quality of qualitative research is considered and clarified. At the end of the chapter, the ethical considerations and research limitations are presented.

### 3.1 Research Aim and Objectives

The previous chapter explored the literature on the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within hotel organizations and revealed research gaps. Firstly, there is limited literature on labour-intensive companies, in particular SME boutique hotels. Secondly, there is an unclear and incomplete view of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within entire organizations because of the neglect of multilevel research investigations. To fill these gaps, the current study aims to explore the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels. In order to accomplish this, the following objectives are identified:

1. To critically review the literature on key concepts and theories of knowledge sharing behaviour and generic HRM practices, making specific reference to knowledge sharing behaviour and HRM in the hotel sector;
2. To develop a conceptual framework to help understand HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels;

3. To explore HRM and knowledge sharing practices and the behaviour of boutique hotel employees, managers and/or owners through qualitative research in Chiang Mai, Thailand;

4. To critically analyse and evaluate the multilevel role of HRM practices in facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour in relation to the conceptual framework;

5. To make an academic contribution to knowledge in the field of HRM and knowledge-sharing practices in SME boutique hotels.

In order to ensure the study interprets and obtains knowledge acceptably, the following section discusses the philosophy of the research.

### **3.2 Philosophy of Research: Interpretivist**

Research philosophy is the way researchers look at the world, or the world view that they apply to answering the research questions (Creswell, 2007). The research philosophy can be a guide for the researcher to develop knowledge in a particular area. It significantly affects the choice of research approach, strategy, and methods, which ultimately contribute new knowledge (Saunders et al., 2012). This means that existing knowledge can be interpreted and obtained differently depending on researchers' philosophical assumptions. There are two distinguishing characteristics which form the multitude of philosophical assumptions, ontological assumptions and epistemological assumptions (Creswell, 2014).

Ontology is a reflection of the individual's interpretation of reality, either objective or subjective. Creswell (2007) states that objectivism represents the position that social phenomena exist in reality, external to and independent of social actors. Subjectivism holds that social entities are created through, and constructed by, the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors (Saunders et al., 2012). The other element of the philosophical assumption is epistemology (Creswell, 2007). This position is based on the relationship between the researcher and those being researched (Creswell, 2014). There are two approaches to epistemological assumptions, positivism and interpretivist. Positivism holds that the social world

exists externally from the researcher and knowledge is only of significance if it is based on observation of this external reality. Therefore, the existence of realities should be measured through objective or quantitative methods such as experiments and surveys (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). This is supported by Creswell (2014), who says that only observable phenomena can provide credible data and facts. Generally, a positivist researcher begins with a hypothesis which they subsequently prove (or disprove) by investigating facts which cannot change rather than impressions. Positivism covers a wide variety of situations and positivist research is usually conducted with a large sample, however it is ineffective in understating a whole process that people attach to action (Saunders et al., 2012). In contrast, interpretivists view reality as socially constructed and given meaning to by people. Reality is inferred subjectively, based on an individual's sensations, reflections or intuitions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Interpretivist researchers attempt to minimize the distance between themselves and the issue being researched by moving as close as possible to the subjects of the research (Creswell, 2007). They are more likely to use a personal interpretative process to understand reality rather than explaining causal relationships by means of objective statistical analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

The main aim of this research is to understand the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. This phenomenon might be seen as objective if knowledge sharing behaviour is mainly influenced by organizational policies, and individuals only share their knowledge because they are following HRM policy, independent of their perceptions. The majority of previous studies (Salis and Williams, 2008; Foss et al., 2009; Sajava, 2014; Llopis and Foss, 2016) which view HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour as objective, investigate this phenomenon using a top-down approach of HRM effecting knowledge sharing behaviour. They select a particular HRM practice which is anticipated to influence knowledge sharing conditions. As a result, the studies identify 'what and which' HRM practices influence 'what and which' factors of knowledge sharing, but do not provide sufficient evidence to explain 'how and why' HRM achieves these effects (Kim and Ko, 2014).

The literature on knowledge sharing behaviour (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Mueller, 2012; Lee et al., 2015; Wang and Noe, 2010) claims that knowledge sharing behaviour is subjective. Individuals may or may not share their knowledge dependent on their perceptions of HRM practices (Kim and Ko, 2014; Liu and Liu, 2011). Furthermore, the perception of HRM is as a primary source encouraging knowledge sharing behaviour (Lee et al., 2015; Boh and Wong, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016). Therefore, to understand the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour, the researcher would like to know what others mean, perceive and experience about how and why HRM practices foster their knowledge sharing behaviour and will try to interpret the phenomena from their points of view. This is considered to be an adoption of an interpretivist stance to the investigation of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization. As a consequence of the subjectivity of the research philosophy and interpretivist stance, this research employs qualitative techniques to conduct the study (Creswell, 2007).

### **3.3 Research Approaches: Inductive Qualitative Research**

There are two types of research approach, deductive and inductive. The deductive approach refers to the development of knowledge by proving a hypothesis which is adopted from existing theory (Saunders et al., 2012). This approach can ascertain the truth or falsity of a particular set of hypotheses, and is appropriate for measuring and collecting data from what can actually be seen or observed (Gray, 2014). The deductive approach is generally associated with quantitative research, which aims to measure, count or quantify a problem of 'how much?', 'how often?' or 'what proportion?' The data collected involves numbers from surveys or questionnaires with a significant sample (Hennink et al., 2011). In contrast, Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) suggest that new knowledge or theories can be built if researchers begin their exploration with a completely open mind without any preconceived ideas of what will be found, and identify patterns and relationships in the phenomenon, generating meaning based on the data gathered. This approach is considered an inductive research approach (Creswell, 2002). Typically, an inductive approach is associated with qualitative research and is appropriate to

explore exotic cultures, understudied phenomena or very complex social phenomena (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Hennink et al. (2011) state that qualitative research aims to understand or explain behaviour and beliefs, identify processes and understand the context of people's experiences using techniques such as interviews, focus groups and observation.

This research aims to develop an in-depth understanding of role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. In doing so, the research focuses on exploring the extent to which individuals share their knowledge and how they see their knowledge sharing as facilitated or inhibited by HRM practices. The literature (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Mueller, 2012; Lee et al., 2015; Wang and Noe, 2010) emphasizes that knowledge sharing behaviour is subjective and dependent on one's perceptions of HRM. Thus, it cannot be easily observed and is difficult to capture numerically (Gray, 2014). As a result, quantitative measures, such as questionnaires, statistical analysis and testing hypotheses, would not be appropriate for this research (Kim and Ko, 2014).

The relationships between HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour are situated in hierarchical setting with interdependence between the various levels of social actors within an organization, from managerial to operational levels (as shown in Figure 2.1). Organizational level actors, such as HRM managers and senior managers are associated with employees' knowledge sharing behaviour (MacNeil, 2003) because they are responsible for creating and implementing HRM policy and practices that promote organizational knowledge sharing behaviour (Fong et al., 2011; Pervaiz et al., 2016). Unit level actors, including line managers or HODs, typically implement HRM practices to promote knowledge sharing behaviour within their teams (MacNeil, 2004; Kim et al., 2015). Operational level actors are willing to share their knowledge when they perceive HRM supports their interpersonal goals associated with knowledge sharing behaviour and promotes building the social elements necessary for collective knowledge sharing behaviour (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011). Therefore, this research is undertaken from the standpoint that HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour is hierarchical and involves social actors from various levels of the organization who

have different experiences of HRM fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. As a result, knowledge of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour can be derived from social actors at the organizational, unit and operative levels of an organization.

There are some studies of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour (Wu and Lee, 2016; Pervaiz et al., 2016) which employ a deductive quantitative approach to collecting data from more than one level of organizational actor. For example, Pervaiz et al. (2016) uses a questionnaire as a research instrument to collect data from actors at managerial and operational level (individual level) to explore the way HRM influences knowledge sharing behaviour (macro level). Wu and Lee (2016) conduct a survey of team leaders and employees in 86 work groups to understand group or team knowledge sharing behaviour. These studies aggregate or combine the results in a nonlinear way, from a lower level (individual level) to provide evidence of a higher level (team or organizational level) (Makela et al., 2014). This aggregation may produce changes in meaning across levels, which represents a serious problem in terms of construct validity (Kozlowski and Klein, 2000). This means employing a deductive quantitative approach is limited for investigating a hierarchical phenomenon constructed from multilevel organizational actors, such as HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour.

Sanders et al. (2014) suggest that an inductive qualitative approach enables researchers to collect data and information from various levels of organizational actors. This is adequate for a holistic analysis that contributes contextual richness to understanding the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization, whereas quantitative approaches would be less effective (Renkema et al., 2016; Makela et al., 2014). The researcher believes that through an inductive qualitative approach to the processes of collecting data with an open-mind, this study can bring insight to the true meaning of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization (Gray, 2014). In addition, the study of Renkema et al. (2016) advancing multilevel thinking and methods in HRM research, suggests that qualitative research, in particular a case study approach, is

valuable for systematically applying multilevel HRM research principles, as discussed in the next section.

### **3.4 Research Design**

#### **3.4.1 Multiple Case Studies**

Creswell (2007) suggests five research designs appropriate for interpretative qualitative research, narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. Although Saunders et al. (2012) recommend the justification for employing a research design be based on the research questions, objectives and the stance of the research philosophy, all five research designs seem to answer the same research questions of 'how' and 'why' (Yin, 2014), and employ similar data collection techniques, such as interviews, observations, documents and audio-visual recordings. However, each approach has a specific objective. Creswell (2007) explains that narrative research focuses on exploring the life of an individual, phenomenology focuses on understanding the essence of the experience, grounded theory focuses on developing a theory grounded in data from the field, and ethnography focuses on describing and interpreting a culture-sharing group. The last approach is case study, which focuses on developing in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple case (Creswell, 2007). Since the objective of this research is to develop a rich understanding of the role of HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels, case study is considered an appropriate research design. The study of Renkema et al. (2016) advancing multilevel thinking and methods in HRM research, recommends case study design as an appropriate methodology to explore the multilevel relationships and processes of organizational phenomena.

According to Yin (2009), the case study approach has two dimensions, the number of cases and the unit of analysis. There are two types of case study, single case and multiple cases, both focusing on one issue or phenomena. A single case study is used to represent a critical, extreme or unique case, while multiple case studies illustrate phenomena from several cases (Stake, 2006). Qualitative researchers view each case study as having a different context and, as such, they are unwilling to



generalize from one case to another. This leads to multiple case studies which, as Yin (2009) explains, uses the logic of replication where it is possible to replicate the procedures for each case study to generate new knowledge. Yin (2009) points out that results taken from multiple cases are more compelling and robust than those from a single case study. Therefore, multiple case studies are preferable to a single case study in representing the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in Thai boutique hotels.

### **3.4.2 Selecting Cases**

Selecting good cases is a challenging task for case study research (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). According to Stake (2006), there are three main criteria for selecting case studies for a multiple case study design: they should relate to the research aim and objectives; they should provide diversity across contexts; and they should provide good opportunities to learn the complexity and contexts.

One of the gaps in previous research (Liu and Liu, 2011; Foss et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2014; Minbaeva et al., 2010) is that the majority of studies focus on knowledge intensive organizations, with a limited number of studies on the hotel industry. Therefore, this research aims to investigate HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry. However, most studies of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry (Bouncken, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005; Bouncken and Pyo, 2002; Kim et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2015) are conducted in either international or five-star hotels. These studies (Bouncken, 2002; Lowe, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005) are likely to use formal HRM in facilitating knowledge sharing within hotels. There appear to be no specific studies examining this reality in small or medium sized hotels, especially boutique hotels (Wang and Noe, 2010), where knowledge sharing is one of the key factors in achieving sustainable competitive advantage (McIntosh, 2005). This section of the hotel industry is likely to use informal HRM approaches and practices and exhibit less sophisticated HRM approaches than larger chain hotels (Nickson, 2013; Young and Boluk, 2012). Therefore, in this research, independently-owned small and medium sized boutique hotels are selected as case studies.

This study focuses on SME boutique hotels in Chiang Mai province, Thailand, one of Asia's most attractive tourist destinations along with Bangkok, Pattaya and Phuket (TAT, 2015). This sector of the hotel industry, particular privately-owned hotels, is rapidly expanding and has the highest number of newly opened hotels of any hotel type (Lasalle, 2013). This means there is a diversity of boutique hotel operations across the city, welcoming both backpackers and high-end tourists (TAT, 2014). Therefore, SME boutique hotels in Chiang Mai provide diversity for multiple case studies.

Defining a hotel as a boutique hotel is another issue for selecting case studies. There is no official source that categorizes hotel types in Thailand (Thai Hotel Association, 2016). Therefore, the definition of boutique hotel is unofficial (Aggett, 2007; Lim and Endean, 2009). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the boutique hotel sector usually, comprises small stylish accommodation (McIntosh, 2005; Lim and Endean, 2009). According to the Thailand Boutique Awards (2017), the size of a boutique hotel can be divided into 3 groups, small (3-20 rooms), medium (21- 50 rooms) and large (51-80 rooms). The boutique hotels in Chiang Mai have an average number of employees of 22.3 and rooms of 27.63 (Tidtichumrerporn, 2010). This study selects hotels for case studies which have more than 20 rooms, in the belief that this size of boutique hotel is not too small to have a hierarchy of organizational structure to provide opportunities to learn about the complexity and contexts (Stake, 2006) of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour, which is a hierarchical phenomenon constructed by multilevel organizational actors.

The researcher initially searched for 'boutique hotel in Chiang Mai' on several reliable websites including [Tripadvisor.com](http://Tripadvisor.com), [Booking.com](http://Booking.com), [Boutiquehotels-chiangmai.com](http://Boutiquehotels-chiangmai.com), and [expedia.co.uk](http://expedia.co.uk) and obtained a list of 30 boutique hotels with more than 20 rooms and located in Chiang Mai. To ensure these 30 hotels qualified as boutique and independently-owned hotels, the researcher contacted the president of the Thai Hotel Association (North) for her approval and agreement. It appeared that all 30 hotels are recognized as boutique hotels, but only 23 are independently owned. Of these 23 hotels, five agreed to participate in the study. Stake (2006) suggests that conducting fewer than four case studies provides

inadequate evidence for a multiple case study whereas more than 15 cases makes the researcher unable to understand the uniqueness of the relationships. Therefore, these five cases are sufficient to develop rich descriptions of the initial set of propositions and provide strong results because '*any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects of cases*' (Patton, 1990, p.172). The following section discusses the appropriated research methods for a multiple case study approach.

### **3.5 Research Methods and Instruments**

The advantage of case study research is that evidence can be gathered from several sources including documents, archival records, interviews, observation and physical artefacts (Saunders et al., 2012). The richness of case study evidence derived from multiple sources helps corroborate the facts and results, avoids biases in interpretation, and increases the validity of the case study (Saunders et al., 2012). The main aim of this study is to develop an in-depth understanding of role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. Guided by the conceptual frameworks developed in Chapter 2 (Figures 2.3 and 2.4), understanding the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour requires three main areas of information and knowledge: 1) how the case study organizations employ their HRM practices; 2) the extent to which organizational actors share their knowledge; and 3) their perceptions of whether their knowledge sharing is facilitated or inhibited by HRM practices. Therefore, this study employs three methods to collect data, face-to-face semi-structured interview, non-participant observation (in public areas) and the scrutiny of documentation.

#### **Face-to-face Semi-Structured Interview**

This study adopts a multilevel study to understand the multiple views and attitudes of human resources at different levels in the organizational hierarchies. Stake (1995) pointed out that the interview is an effective and logical method to obtain those multiple realities. Gray (2014) added that interviewing also helps the researcher explore in more depth factors behind individual behaviour. Therefore,

this study employs interviews as its main method of gathering information and data in conjunction with documentary review and non-participant observation methods (Bryman, 2012).

According to Saunders et al. (2012), there are three types of interviews, structured, semi-structured and unstructured (in-depth). In order to select an appropriate interview type, Saunders et al. (2012) introduces the need for consistency between research objectives, strategies and methodology as a key point to consider. This research adopts an interpretivist, qualitative stance, and both semi-structured and unstructured interviews align with this research approach (Creswell, 2007).

An in-depth or unstructured-interview is an informal interview, which has no predetermined list of questions. When conducting unstructured interview, participants are given opportunities to freely express their opinions, perceptions, beliefs and experiences (King, 2004). While applying semi-structured interviews, the researcher will have a list of key themes of questions (Saunders et al., 2012). The lists of key questions will help in reminding the researcher of the research areas which need probing (Gray, 2014). A semi-structured interview possibly has some additional questions and prompts to promote more detail and discussion (Saunders et al., 2012). This is particularly important for an interpretivist researcher who undertakes a multilevel study to understand the subjective meaning given by participants from various levels of an organization (Gray, 2014).

Furthermore, the researcher experienced from the pilot study (more detail in section 3.6.1) that undertaking the interviewing was not easy in terms of asking questions in ordering and receiving anticipated answers. This made the researcher lose direction and omit some research areas, which needed to be covered. As a result, it is necessary to have some key questions to ensure the researcher obtains all research focuses and some cue questions in order to guide the participants to answer in the right directions. Also, Bryman (2012) suggests that a multiple case study needs a semi-structured interview approach to ensure all anticipated data and information from each case studies is gathered for cross-case comparability. Therefore, a semi-structured interview is considered to be a suitable interview

technique for this study as it is appropriate for both the research strategy and the ability of the researcher to conducting the research

The standpoint of this study is that HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour are hierarchical and involve social actors at various levels of an organization, all of which have different perspectives and experiences of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. Therefore three interview question sets for the three levels of organizational actor are developed. Each set includes main questions, additional questions and clarifying questions (see Appendix 1: Interview Questions).

### **Set A: Interview Questions for Respondents at Organizational Level**

Organizational-level respondents refers to the organizational actors who are responsible for creating or implementing HRM policy and practice to promote organizational knowledge sharing behaviour (Fong et al., 2011; Pervaiz et al., 2016). They might be the owners, HRM managers or senior managers (MacNeil, 2003). Therefore, interviewing organizational-level respondents aims to explore the views of respondents at organizational level about how they create and implement HRM practices to facilitate knowledge sharing behaviour in their hotels.

The first interview question is: *'Please tell me about how you support your employees to learn to deliver high quality customer service'*. Additional questions relate to HRM activities associated with knowledge sharing behaviour such as selection processes, work design, training and development, performance appraisal and social activities (guided by the conceptual framework). This question is intended to make the respondents reveal their views and experiences of creating and using HRM practices to support knowledge sharing behaviour in their organizations. The answers to this question generate insight into the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing within organizations from an organizational-level perspective.

The second question is: *'How do you share your knowledge (information, skills, and experience) with your employees, and why?'* This question explores the extent of knowledge sharing within each case study organization and is intended to elicit the views of respondents about their knowledge sharing behaviour. It helps build links

between HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour.

### **Set B: Interview Questions for Respondents at Unit Level**

The unit level respondents are the organizational actors who create or implement HRM practices to promote knowledge sharing behaviour in their departments. Typically, unit-level organizational actors are line managers, HODs or Team leaders (MacNeil, 2004; Kim et al., 2015). The aim of interviewing HODs is similar to interviewing organizational-level respondents. Therefore, there is the possibility of using the same set of interview questions, focusing on the departmental level of HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour, for example: *'Please tell me about how you support your team to learn to deliver high quality customer service'* and: *'How can you share your knowledge and information with your team, and why?'* The answers from HODs from various departments generate insight into the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour at departmental level.

Although, HODs are responsible for implementing the HRM policies and practices that emerge at organizational level to use within their departments, not all such policies are implemented. The use of HRM practice depends on the nature and culture in particular job groups (Wright and Nishii, 2007). Therefore, the question: *'How can you implement the HRM practices you have told me about?'* is added into the interview question Set B. Adding this question aims to generate either similarity or differentiation from the way HRM practices foster knowledge sharing behaviour at organizational level. It leads to an understanding of the different roles HRM practice plays in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour at organizational and departmental level.

### **Set C: Interview Questions for Respondents at Operational Level**

Operational-level respondents refers to employees who experience and perceive HRM practice. Employees are willing to share their knowledge when they perceive HRM as supporting their interpersonal goals associated with knowledge sharing behaviour and promoting the social elements necessary for collective knowledge sharing behaviour (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011). Therefore,

Set C of interview question for employees aims to elicit insight into the role of HRM practices in fostering their knowledge sharing behaviour from the employees' perspectives.

The first question is: *'Please tell me your story of working from when you applied until today?'* In answering this question, the respondents reveal their experiences and perceptions of HRM practices since they started working at the hotel. The answers provide evidence of HRM practices used in the organization from the employees' points of view. The information gathered at operational level, triangulated with the information from organizational and unit-level respondents, generates insight into the employment of HRM practices in boutique hotels. The answers relate to how employees perceive HRM practice in fostering or inhibiting their knowledge sharing behaviour.

The second question explores the extent to which employees share their knowledge. It is: *'When you deliver high customer service, have you ever told anyone else (colleague / supervisor/ manager) about this incident? If so, how and why?'* This question is intended to reveal the respondent's experience of sharing their knowledge (of delivering best customer service) and provide an opportunity for them to discuss their facilitators of knowledge sharing behaviour. This leads to an in-depth understanding of the role of HRM practice in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. However, in a pilot study it was found that operational employees asked about 'high quality customer service' could not explain whether they were delivering high quality services. One operational employee said, *'I do not know if I am delivering high quality of service, I just try to make customer satisfied and try not to make problems or mistakes for my team'*. Therefore, the researcher uses the term 'customer satisfaction' instead of 'high quality customer service', revising the interview question to: *'When have you made a customer very satisfied, have you ever told anyone else (colleague / supervisor/ manager) about this incident? If so, how and why?'*

After undertaking a pilot study another interview question was added, because respondents mentioned the problems and barriers to sharing knowledge in their

hotels (more details in Section 3.6.1: Pilot Study). Adding this question helps the researcher gain richer information about the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. The interview question about barriers or problems in sharing knowledge is added to interview question Set A and Set B: '*Are there any barriers or problems when you support employees to deliver service quality?*' and the interview question: '*Is it difficult to talk about or discuss your job with your colleagues?*' is added to Set C.

### **Non-participant Observation**

Although the interview is recognized as an effective and logical method to obtain multiple views and attitudes to individual behaviour (Stake, 1995) and helps the researcher explore the factors behind the reality in depth (Gray, 2014), gathering data from only one source is insufficient to provide strong evidence for case study research because each source yields a different kind of insight into reality (Stake, 2006).

The determination of the data collected in this study (guided by the conceptual framework) reveals three areas of data needed to understand the role of HRM practices in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour: the employment of HRM practices to foster knowledge sharing; the extent of knowledge sharing behaviour; and the perception of how respondents see knowledge sharing as facilitated or inhibited by HRM practices. This study employs non-participant observation to observe, and get a direct understanding of: 1) the extent to which knowledge is shared; 2) how hotels support employees to share knowledge; and 3) the organizational culture and environment.

According to Yang (2004, 2009), different levels of employees have different perceptions of knowledge sharing behaviour and share different knowledge at different levels within organizational hierarchies. Top managers mostly share strategic knowledge, while line managers share their work experience knowledge. At an operational level, employee operational knowledge and job-related knowledge are shared among employees. Yang (2009) states that knowledge sharing can take place at training activities, meetings and briefings, face-to-face



communication during working hours and informal social activities as well as being found in written materials such as reports and logbooks. Therefore, observations are made of the front and back of house operations and situations where knowledge sharing practices and behaviour might occur, for example meetings, morning briefings, training events and as the employees deliver services.

After undertaking a pilot study, the observation schedule and Memo (Appendix 2: observation schedule and Memo) was revised (more detail is in Section 3.6.1: Pilot Study).

### **Documentation**

It is recognized that documentation analysis plays an important role in case study research. Documentation can be used as either a primary method of data and information collection or to compliment other methods such as interview and observation (Rowley, 2002). Documents and archival sources are a rich source of evidence, providing background information and broad coverage of data that cannot be observed. Also, document analysis can provide data that respondents do not mention (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, this study collects data from documentation as another method to ensure the study is comprehensive and critical (Saunders et al., 2012).

Multilevel approach to HRM researchers (Renkema et al., 2016; Makela et al., 2014) point out that HRM differs at different levels of an organization. It emerges at firm level but is implemented at unit level and perceived at operational level (Boxall and Purcell, 2016). Typically, HRM strategy is aligned with business strategy. Due to there being various units within an organization, and those sub units having specific cultures and climates (MacNeil, 2003, 2004), HRM policies and practices can differ for different groups of employees (Wright and Nishii, 2007). Therefore, in order to understand of how case studies create and use HRM practices to support knowledge sharing behaviour in hotels, this study requires documents which contain business strategy and HRM policy and practice at both organizational and departmental level. Guided by the conceptual framework, HRM policies and practices that might foster knowledge sharing behaviour include selection processes, work designs,

training and development, performance appraisals and social activities. The study of Yang (2009) reveals that knowledge sharing can be found in written materials such as reports and logbooks. Therefore, this research requires relevant HRM documents (see Appendix 3: Relevant HRM Documentation) and business strategy documents from the case study hotels.

An invitation letter was prepared, requesting the potential case study hotels to volunteer their organizations as research participants. The letter introduced the researcher and the research, identified the level of access required including the relevant HRM and business strategy documents, non-participant observation in front and back of house operations and face-to-face interviews with the HRM manager or hotel manager, heads of departments and operational employees. The letter clearly stated that the information and data gathered would be confidential and used only for this study. A contact email address and Thai mobile number for the researcher were provided in the letter. The letter was written in English with an intent to translate it into Thai, but after the initial contact either via email or phone to the owners or hotel managers, the letter in English version was preferred. Therefore, the invitation letters (see Appendix 4: Invitation Letter) and permission forms (see Appendix 5: Permission Form) were sent to 23 SME independently owned boutique hotels in Chiang Mai city, Thailand on February 2016, before the primary data collection which took place between March and June 2016.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

The primary data collection process had two stages, the pilot and the main study. The purpose of the pilot study was to help the researcher observe and refine the data collection and modify the research instruments used in the main study.

#### **3.6.1 Pilot Study**

A pilot study is a small study used to test the research protocols, research instruments, sample recruitment strategies and other research techniques in preparation for a main study (Saunders et al., 2012). It offers an opportunity for refining the interview questions and helps the researchers become familiar with

data collection and initial analysis. Before undertaking the pilot study, the researcher did a pre-pilot study with a Thai restaurant in Oxford, UK. This helped the researcher develop the interview questions and practice interviewing. To undertake the pilot study, the researcher contacted the president of the Thai Hotel Association (North) and asked her to announce this PhD project to the members in Chiang Mai. Fortunately, she volunteered her organization to be part of the pilot study. The pilot study was conducted during one week at the beginning of March 2016. The pilot study hotel is a 75-room boutique hotel with 145 employees, located on the Ping River, Chiang Mai province. The HRM documentation was not intended to be included in the pilot study. Three observations and seven interviews were undertaken and this facilitated the development of the research instruments, both the observation schedule and the interview questions.

Three observations were taken in public areas of the hotel, the lobby when the researcher was waiting to meet the general manager, the hotel restaurant when the researcher was having lunch, and the back of house when a duty manager escorted the researcher around the hotel. Unfortunately, it was difficult to attend the morning briefings or training events as planned, because these events were reserved for hotel staff only. However, the observations in the front of house when employees were delivering customer services enabled the researcher to explore the knowledge sharing practices and behaviours. Inspecting both the front and back of house meant the researcher could observe: 1) the extent to which knowledge was shared; 2) how the hotel supported employees to share knowledge; and 3) the organizational culture and environment. Therefore, attending morning briefings and training events might not have been necessary as the researcher could obtain the data by interviewing participants about these events. Additionally, as the researcher was walking around back of house areas, she found that the hotel provided knowledge sharing facilities such as a relaxation room. Therefore, the researcher added the physical elements and communication facilities to the observation schedule for the main study, particularly the back of house areas such as canteens and rest areas.

The interview dates, times and participants were arranged and assigned by the general manager. Seven interviews were undertaken with people at three levels of human resources, one general manager, four heads of department (human resource manager, food and beverage manager, front office manager, housekeeping manager), and two operational employees (a waiter and an assistant in marketing). The interviews took place during operational times and in areas including the hotel lobby, restaurant, business centre and general manager's office. The average duration of the interviews was approximately 45 minutes. Most participants understood English clearly so some questions which would be hard to translate into Thai could be asked in English. Interviewing respondents at different levels of the organizational hierarchy revealed similar issues of knowledge sharing behaviour, which were the problems and barriers of sharing knowledge. The general manager said, *'we have tried to support staff but some do not learn and also do not want to change... maybe they are aged and have been working here before me'*. A bartender commented, *'I do not know how to teach new staff or what to share if newcomers do not want to ask me'*. It became clear that adding a question about the problems or barriers to sharing knowledge and how to deal with them would help the researcher gain richer information about the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. The pilot study helped the researcher address the issue of the language of the interview questions. For example, one operational-level respondent showed confusion about the term 'high quality customer service'. because he could not explain whether he was delivering high quality services, saying, *'I do not know if I am delivering high quality of service, I just try to make customer satisfied and try not to make problems or mistakes for my team'*. Therefore, the researcher adopted the term 'customer satisfaction' instead of 'high quality customer service'.

Undertaking the pilot study provided the researcher with opportunities to practice and become familiar with accessing hotels and conducting research (Bryman, 2012). The researcher found that the greatest difficulty in undertaking the pilot study was running the interview professionally. It was difficult to multitask, as the researcher found herself asking questions, taking notes, thinking and analysing at the same time. The researcher realized that no matter how well the research was

organized, particularly the interview schedule, it would be difficult to ask the questions in the exact same order for many reasons. For example, when participants gave unexpected answers which did not link to the next question or did not answer the question itself, the researcher had to ask other related questions. This made the researcher confused and led to silence, because the researcher could not think of the next questions or how to return the subject back to the topic. Therefore, undertaking the pilot study was crucial. It provided the researcher with opportunities to practice and familiarize herself with interviewing. She was able to concentrate on the participants' stories and answers and respond quickly to answers which related to the key topics of the research. This was good practice of qualitative data collection before undertaking the main study (Saunders et al., 2012)

### **3.6.2 The Main Study**

Undertaking a pilot study helped the researcher refine the research instruments including the observation and interview schedules. It provided good opportunities to practice and experience collecting qualitative data. This enhanced the researcher's confidence that the research methods and instruments, along with the experiences from the pilot study, would accomplish the research objectives. With the facilitation of the University of Phayao, Thailand, the researcher's place of work, and the president of the Thai Hotel Association (North), the researcher contacted the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> hotels on the list of selected boutique hotels. The invitation letter and permission form were sent to either the owners or HRM managers. Two hotels agreed to participate in the research. Then the researcher contacted and sent the invitation letter and permission form to the 11<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> hotels on the list, and three agreed to participate. The characteristics of the five case studies are shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1 Summary of case studies**

Themes	Aster	Daisy	Rosemary	Sunflower	Yellow
Age of property (years)	2	9	10	11	11
No. of rooms	30	55	34	20	42
No. of employees	60	72	34	26	52
Employee tenure	2 years (since it opened)	Less than 1 year – 7 years	2 years – 9 years	2 years – 4 years	50% of employees less than 1 year – 10 years
Ownership	Joint venture (Thai company with Singaporean investor)	Management company (Thai owner)	Owned and managed (Thai owner)	Owned and managed (Thai owner)	Owned and managed (Thai owner)
Management system	A standardized management system	A standardized management system	A decentralized management system (owner – manager)	A centralized management system	A decentralized management system (owner – manager)
Core service values	Personalized passionate service by a dedicated professional team offering tailor made memorable experiences	Unmistakable service excellence	Family and friendly service	Warm family service	Friendly and local service

It can be seen from Table 3.1 that, although all five case studies are medium sized boutique hotels (20-55 guest rooms) and independent, they differ in ownership, management system and employment level (more detail in Chapter 4). This shows a diversity across the five case studies, which can enhance the representativeness of the sample chosen by the researcher (Seawright and Gerrin, 2008; Stake 2006). The researcher spent almost 2 weeks at each case study hotel for the observation and interviews.

### **Face-to-face Semi-Structured Interview**

Once the researcher received permission to access each of the hotels, she asked the general manager to ask all staff whether they would like to participate in the interviews. There were 40 interviews with staff at three levels of the organizational hierarchy from the five case studies, there were five at organization level, two general managers, one management director (the hotel owner), and two human

resource managers. There were sixteen participants at departmental level, including human resources, food and beverages, kitchen, front office, housekeeping, engineering, and the accounting department, and nineteen at operative level, including secretaries, waiters/waitresses, engineers, guest service assistants, demo-chefs, room attendants and cleaners (see Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2** Summary of respondents

Case study	No. of respondents	Organizational level	Departmental level	Operative level
Sunflower	7	1: GM	2: FO, FB	4: 2 Waitresses, Eng., GSA
Daisy	13	1: GM	6: FO, HK, ENG, HRM, FB, AC	6: 2 GSA, 2 waitresses, Eng., Chef
Yellow	7	1: Owner	3: FO, HRM, HK	3: 2 waiters, GSA
Rosemary	6	1: HRM	2: FO, HK	3: GSA, Maid, Waiter
Aster	7	1: HRM	3: FO, FB, HK	3: Waitress, Maid and PA
Total	40	5	16	19

The interview questions (in English) were sent to the HRM manager in each case study to be approved and to establish whether all the questions were allowed; no questions were prohibited. Although the interview questions and the thesis are in English, the research was based in Thailand, and all the participants and the researcher are Thai and speak the Thai language fluently. Therefore, to eliminate the issues of barriers to expressing views and translation equivalence, including lexical, idiomatic, grammatical syntactical and experiential equivalence (Usuneir, 1998), all the interviews were conducted in Thai.

The interviews were arranged either by the hotel itself (Hotel Daisy and Hotel Aster) or by the researcher with help from HRM managers (Hotel Rosemary, Hotel Sunflower and Hotel Yellow). Three sets of interview questions were asked to participants at different levels of the organizational hierarchies. As the interviews started, the researcher thanked the interviewees for their participation, then introduced herself as a PhD student and a lecturer in one of the reputable

universities in Northern Thailand. This was intended to give credibility to the researcher and build trust between respondents and the researcher (Saunders et al., 2014). The researcher briefly explained about the research and informed all participants that they were able to withdraw from the research at any time without providing reasons. Then the participants were asked to sign the consent form (Appendix 6: Consent Form) and permission for audio-recording was requested before the start of the interview.

The interviews were undertaken during the daytime, mostly in hotel areas, such as the hotel lobby, meeting room, restaurant or business centre. A few interviews were undertaken in public areas including coffee shops and public parks. The interviews took approximately 60 minutes, the shortest being 28 minutes and the longest being 96 minutes for all the main questions. Although, the questions were not asked in order, the researcher made certain that all questions were answered in a way adequate to achieve the research aim and objectives. The researcher ended each interview by thanking the interviewees again for their participation.

The study uses non-participant observation techniques (Mills et al., 2010) to explore the extent to which knowledge is shared, and how the hotels support their employees to share knowledge through the organizational culture and environment. The researcher asked hotel managers to announce to all staff that the observations would take place on certain dates in the back and front of house spaces during operational times. As many observations as possible were undertaken by the researcher. In reality, approximately twenty knowledge sharing events were observed in both the front and back of house operations across the five case studies, as shown in Table 3.3.



**Table 3.3** Summary of non-participant observations

Case studies	Events/places	Codes of memos
<b>Sunflower</b>	helping room attendants make up rooms	SOB1
	the check-in process through to the check-out process	SOB2
	sit in staff canteen during lunch time	SOB3
	in the restaurants	SOB4
<b>Daisy</b>	while the researcher was waiting to meet the hotel manager in the hotel lobby	DOB1
	having lunch with heads of department team in the hotel restaurant three times	DOB2-4
	sitting in the staff canteen	DOB5
	during an interview which took place in the meeting room located in hotel back office	DOB6
	In a car park	DOB7
<b>Yellow</b>	in the hotel lobby while the researcher was waiting for and doing the interviews	YOB1
	room attendants were making and setting up rooms	YOB2
	waitresses serving the customers in the restaurant	YOB3
	listening to employees having conversations in the staff canteen	YOB4
<b>Rosemary</b>	the researcher was having breakfast in the hotel restaurant	ROB1
	sitting in the hotel lobby and front office	ROB2
	the HRM manager escorted the researcher around the hotel, both front and back of house	ROB3
<b>Aster</b>	in the hotel lobby where the hotel restaurant was also located	AOB1-3
	the employees' interactions during operations	AOB4

### Documentation

The list of relevant HRM documentation and business strategies was emailed with each invitation letter and permission form to the owners or hotel managers. The list of documentation is a full list of HRM documentation collated from the academic literature (Nickson, 2013). All five case study organizations were willing to provide some of the documentation requested, including the hotels' visions, hotel fact books, job descriptions, orientation check lists, performance reports, training plans, job evaluation forms and work quotas. They were either in the form of paper or electronic documents. During the interviews, some participants led the researcher to documents associated with knowledge sharing practice, such as logbooks,

memos, handover reports, and daily job reports (for the housekeeping department).

When the data collection was finished, the data gathered in the form of documents (such as observation notes, memos and related HRM documents) were treated as strictly confidential and securely stored in the research suite of Oxford School of Hospitality Management, Faculty of Business, Oxford Brookes University. The audio records were kept in the researcher's personal laptop or on Google Docs (using Oxford Brookes' ID). As soon as the researcher returned to the research suite of Oxford School of Hospitality Management, all audio recordings were transferred to the researcher's personal computer, accessible only with a password.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Analysing case study evidence is complicated, as a case study database includes a multitude of evidence in various forms from multiple sources (Rowley, 2002). Generally, there is no specific analytic strategy or procedure agreed for the analysis of case studies, and researchers need to develop their own analytic strategies (Yin, 2014). Therefore, this study developed its own analytic procedures and strategies based on the quality and reliability of case study research.

#### **3.7.1 Data Preparation: Transcription and Translation**

The first step in analysing qualitative data is the transcription (Saunders et al., 2012). There were 40 files of data from the face-to-face semi-structured interviews. All the interviews were recorded on voice recorders and needed to be transcribed. The interviews from the first case study were transcribed by the researcher as soon as possible after they were undertaken. The researcher took 4-5 hours to transcribe 45-60 minutes of interview recording. Saunders et al. (2012) suggests possible methods, such as paying a professional touch-typist to transcribe interview recordings to reduce the vast amount of personal time needed for transcribing interviews verbatim. Therefore, the four remaining case studies were transcribed by a transcription professional in Thailand. However, Saunders et al. (2012) point out that the paid transcriber may not be familiar with the data and some

information and data may not be included. As a result, the researcher listened to each interview recording again and took notes of key words or phrases as well as re-reading the notes taken from the interviews to ensure accuracy. At this step, the researcher also removed identifiers from the data in order to preserve participant anonymity. Each participant was assigned a code for analysis (see Appendix 7: Participant Information).

Since the data was collected in the Thai language and the thesis is in English, this raised the issue of data translation. Usuneir (1998) argues that translation into English is only necessary when the researcher is a native English speaker undertaking cross-cultural international research. Usuneir (1998) also points out issues of translation such as cost, the difficulty of finding a translator fluent in both Thai and English, and translation equivalence, including lexical, idiomatic, grammatical syntactical and experiential equivalence. As there were approximately a thousand pages of transcripts, and translation would be time and cost consuming for the researcher, and as the researcher is a native Thai speaker and the interviews were in Thai, it was more efficient to develop and identify the initial codes through the medium of the Thai language. The researcher was able to understand the meaning and background of the incidents and phenomena (Usunier, 1998). Once the data was arranged and coded, only the quotations which were to be included in the thesis were translated into English. When the data was transcribed and identifiers removed, the data could be analysed.

### **3.7.2 Coding Processes**

To increase the efficiency of analysing such a huge amount of data, Saunders et al. (2012) recommend computer-assisted tools such as Atlas.ti or NVivo. This software can help with coding and categorizing large amounts of data, matching codes and counting the incidence of words or codes. However, this research employs a multiple case study approach which requires two steps of data analysis, individual case study analysis and cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006; Renkema et al., 2016). As a consequence, the data was divided into multiple smaller sets. Using a computer-assisted tool such as NVivo to analyse small sets of qualitative data was not

beneficial in this instance (Bryman, 2014). The nature of a case study is about analysing complex behaviour within a complex context and this produces a diverse set of evidence, which Yin (2014) suggests means researchers need to develop their own analytical strategies to tackle them. Computerized tools cannot necessarily handle this diverse array. As a result, the researcher decided to analyse the qualitative data manually, and this technique helped the researcher further familiarize herself with the data (Yin, 2014).

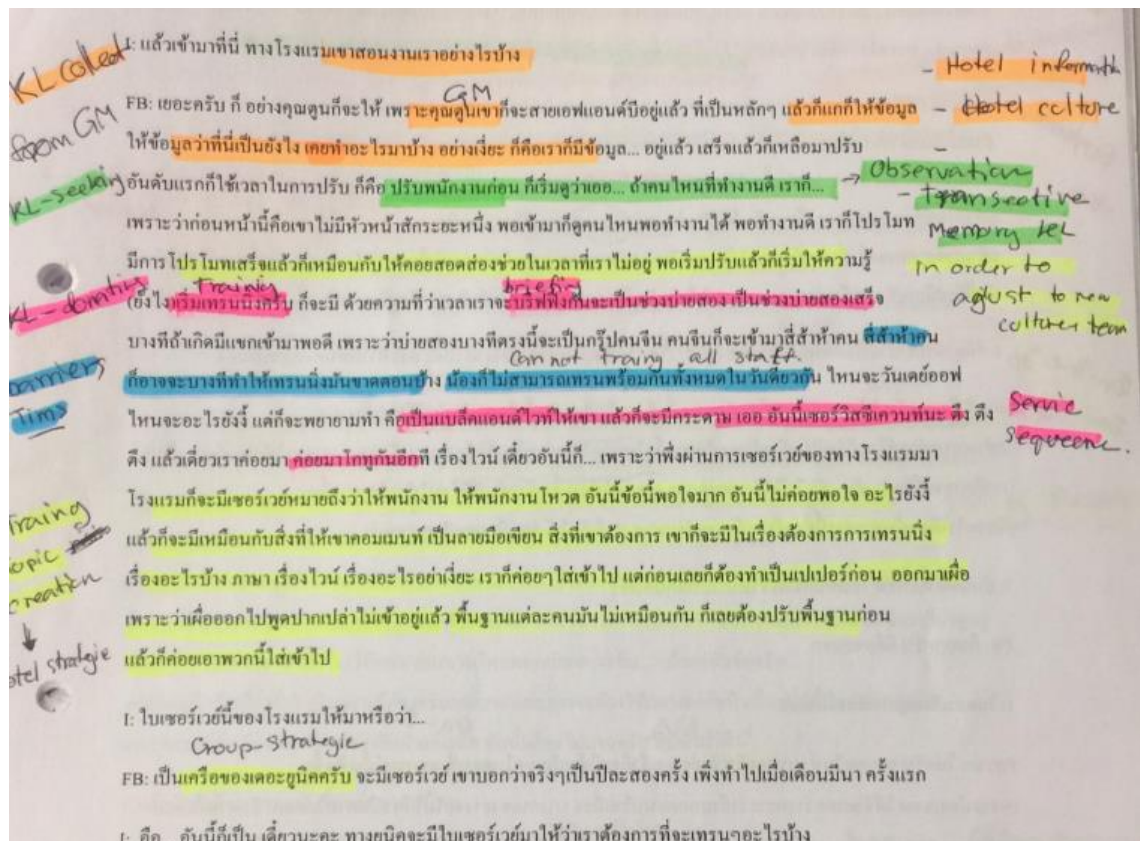
Hennink et al. (2011) distinguish codes into two types, deductive and inductive. The codes derived from the research topic, the research instrument or the conceptual framework are called deductive codes, while codes developed by directly reading the data which have arisen from the participants are called inductive codes. The process chosen to analyse qualitative data needs to be consistent with the research philosophy, strategy and data collection methods (Saunders et al., 2012, p.556). Since the research stance is interpretivist and employs a qualitative method to collect data, an inductive procedure (Creswell, 2007; Saunders et al., 2012) is employed as the main analysis process in this study.

According to Stake (2006) multiple case studies aim to better understand the phenomena than single case studies. Therefore, the researcher has to understand each particular case, one at a time, and then compare the similarities and differences of the cases. The next section presents the individual case study analysis.

### **3.7.3 Individual Case Study Analysis**

Individual case study analysis helps the researcher understand the complexity and situational uniqueness of each case (Stake, 2006). To understand the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization, the researcher began by reviewing all the data and information gathered from the primary data collection, i.e. interview transcriptions, observation notes, memos and other documentation. The researcher read the interview transcriptions several times, highlighting key words, phrases and sentences related to HRM and knowledge sharing (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Data highlighting for coding



At this stage of the analysis, the researcher reviewed the documentation, observation memos and notes using the same technique as the interview transcriptions (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 Coding from observation memos

Items	Details
Date	25 March 2016 10:00
Time	10:00 - 11:00
Location/events	HSPK ⇒ Office + Making Room (Assist)
Duration	10:00 - 11:00
Who are they?	Researcher - HSPK - FO Spm, HSKP manager - Room Attendant.
Topic	Making Room + Bed ⇒ Room status, which room is cleaned, etc.
Channels	F-T-F, 100% verbal communication
Interaction/respond	maximal 100% ⇒ all are discussing / PA shows her ideas naturally ⇒ willingness to...

training beh  
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 types of KL

After reviewing all the data and information gathered from the primary data collection, the researcher got a sense of the overall data, which established ideas for the initial coding. The researcher organized the data by putting the highlighted data into tables and trying to understand what the data meant, which Yin (2014, p.135) calls 'preliminary interpretation'. Table 3.4 shows an example of the tables with some quotations selected to illustrate the findings.

**Table 3. 4** Example of data reduction

Themes	Coding	Quotations	Translations
HRM : Selection	GM involved with selection process and requires qualifications  Qualifications: personality, languages and teachable	ตอนหลังผมขอ HR ว่า อย่าว่าผมละเมิดสิทธิ์ในการทำงาน แต่ผมขอสกรีนด้วยนิดนึงเพราะว่าศักยภาพในการสกรีนของแต่ละคน ก็คงจะไม่เท่ากัน ผมก็เสนอ ผมจะสกรีน แล้วผมก็จะให้ Feedback หัวหน้างานเขาไปว่า สิ่งที่ผมต้องการ Improve และผมก็จะให้โจทย์ ในการเทรนนิ่งเขาคนไหนที่ผมไม่เห็นด้วยนี้ ผมบอกว่าคุณได้ Screen แล้วหรือ แล้วผมก็ถามว่าคุณมั่นใจกับคนนี้หรือ สามารถเทรนได้งานของเราจะลง trainable เป็นมือเป็นแรงให้กับเรา	<i>'I ask the HR to be part of selecting and screening procedure regarding the applicants' personality, language proficiency and teachable'</i>
	Selection process  - HRM manager initially screened the general requirements - HODs held full authority in selecting their staff - GM finalised  Qualifications: educated person and personality	พี่ (HR) แค่อูเบื้องต้น ในเรื่องของ โอเค คุณสมบัติ การศึกษา อ่า บุคลิกภาพ อะไร เบื้องต้น แล้วก็เรื่องของ การแอบถามด้วยว่า น้องเค้ามีบุคลิกเป็นอย่างไร ประมาณนั้น แต่คนตัดสินใจก็จะเป็น หัวหน้าแผนก HOD และ GM จะเป็น คนสุดท้าย	<i>'I (HR) just initial screen if the candidate meets the basic requirements, such as education and personality, then HOD is one who makes decision and GM is the last one to approve'</i>

In doing this, the initial codes emerged from the data and there was a significant amount of coding from each transcription. It was difficult for the researcher to understand the story of the data. Therefore, the researcher created a table to summarize the emerging coding by categorizing it into three main themes, HRM, knowledge sharing and service quality, as the example shown in Figure 3.3.

**Figure 3.3** Example of the summary of the emerging coding

F&B, DE Delivering High Service practices	KS behaviour and practice	HRM Practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employee work multi-tasks</li> <li>- Collaborate with kitchen</li> <li>- External Audit → TUC               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work, Performance evaluation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>KL - collection From GM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hotel work culture</li> <li>• Hotel information</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training topic → employee survey from TUC</li> <li>- Performance evaluation</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <del>Know what</del> customer want + customer behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>KL - seeking by observation</b> <sup>entire hotel</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transactive memory</li> <li>• Customer behaviour</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On-the-job Training               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involving when necessary</li> <li>• Involving observation skill</li> </ul> </li> <li>- briefing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer observation skills</li> <li>HOD + staff working together</li> <li>• <del>approach</del> manager. transformational leadership.</li> <li>HOD is being accepted from bus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>KL - donating to employee</b> by training, meeting               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• operation KL on-the-job</li> <li>• Service Sequence</li> <li>• Product KL</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transformational leadership</li> <li>- Training scheduled every month to HR + Training Record</li> <li>- delegation → supervisor training</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OD monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>KL - exchange with staff</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• New problem development</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friend Recruitment</li> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Attitude → Service</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><u>error / Problem</u> → Forget in small detail but inputs</p>		

Then, the researcher examined the summary tables of the emerging coding again. This helped the researcher categorize the themes of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour which emerged from each level of analysis, organizational, departmental, and operative. In order to organize the data, the researcher created tables of summary coding, as shown in Figure 3.4.



**Figure 3.4** Example of summary coding: various levels of HRM

HRM practice	Firm-level	Unit-level	Operational-level
Goal	Hotel's financial performance Hotel's situation and characteristics Service's core value (complement)	Team service performance under hotel's situations and team characteristic	Do the job and deliver service (employee's motivation / enjoyment) Not value by OR Motivation low OR S Not comm
Qualification	self-taught less experience Local people responsible	Core qualification less experience service mind specific qualification honestly (HK) communication skills (FO)	Perceived given opportunity less experience / skill
Work design	multiple tasks and job variety empowerment (decentralization) to HODs (not clear vision & policy)	Multiple tasks (FO, FB, and HR+IT) Job responsible (HK) Job Redundancy (FO) Teamwork	1. Multiple task Positive: Gain knowledge and being able to work in many functions Negative: Tense and confuse, which lead to work errors 2. Job Autonomy decentral- Positive: empowerment Negative: being not supported 3. Job Redundancy remember customer's detail and reduce work error (opportunity to show)
Training and development	on-the-job training depending on HODs self-taught	By HR for all employees required by law annual trainings BY HODs within division For newcomer: hands-on by HODs and senior staff For all employees: Coaching and mentoring by HODs and team member	No skills improvement being tired and bored of training newcomer but still have to do as it is a job Coaching and mentoring by HODs and team member family-like working environment
rewards system	tenure based-system pay rewards excluding salary	Rely on firm-level	Fair system: Retention
Performance appraisal	MD and HODs evaluation Quality of work A team player	MD and HODs evaluation (HK and FB) Peer / team evaluation (FO)	Sense of team (FO) Family-like working environment
Social activities	As rewards	By HR manager Team building / ice breaking as rewards Annual meeting with owner	Unvalued voice No sense of belonging

Examination of the summary tables of the emerging coding (as shown in Figure 3.3) revealed the range of HRM practices involved in facilitating knowledge sharing, how and why employees share their knowledge, and the patterns of knowledge sharing, as shown in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5** Example of summary themes for knowledge sharing behaviour in one case study

Participants	Types of knowledge	Place	Channels	Reasons
All participants	Organizational KL: hotel situation/problems Individual knowledge: ideas and suggestions to improve hotel performance	Annual meeting 1-2 times/year	FTF	To explore the problems and how to address them, aiming to improve service performance
Among employees within the department	Job specific / job related/customer/experiences	During operational times / end of the day (HK) / shift handover (FO) / correcting work errors of each other	FTF/ Line application/ logbook/ memo (FB)	- As responsibility - Everyone do, I have to do (Y02) - If I don't share, it might affect my team (Y01) - For day off (Y03)



Finally, the researcher created two sets of data, HRM practice at various levels in organizational hierarchies, and patterns of knowledge sharing practice. The researcher combined these two data sets into one table in order to provide a new way of organizing and thinking about the textually embedded data. An example is shown in Table 3.6. The researcher replicated the processes of data analysis with all five case studies. The findings from each case study analysis became the data for the next stage of analysis, which was the cross-case analysis discussed in the following section.

**Table 3.6** Themes of multilevel HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour: an example of one case study

Levels of analysis	HRM	Knowledge sharing behaviour	Reasons for sharing
Organizational	<p><b>Intention 1 : Build effective teamwork</b>  <u>Policies and practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A peer interview to ensure selecting a right employee who fits with a team</li> <li>- Orientation programmes concerning team building</li> <li>- Peer review of performance appraisal</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention 2 : Delivering a tailor made service</b>  <u>Policies and practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality control</li> <li>- Monthly training activities for entire hotel</li> <li>- Individual based rewards system</li> <li>- Effective communication</li> </ul>	<p><b>Across hotel</b>  Regularly shared (organizational knowledge) in several activities and events such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GM meeting / monthly meeting</li> <li>- IT system (guest history)</li> <li>- Email /Line application /notice board</li> </ul> <p><b>Between departments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Routinely shared) in morning briefing and daily operational hours</li> <li>- Spontaneously shared customer behaviour knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concern with organizational performance</li> <li>- Parts of jobs/responsibility</li> <li>- Organizational culture</li> </ul>
Departmental	<p><b>Intention 1: Build effective teamwork</b>  <u>Policies and practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open communications</li> <li>- A sister-brother relationship</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention 2: Delivering a tailor made service</b>  <u>Policies and practices:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Varieties of training techniques</li> <li>- HODs work together with teams</li> </ul>	<p><b>Within department (HOD and team members)</b>  knowledge: both organizational and individual knowledge is shared regularly during operational routines via face-to-face: team briefing, training activities, walkie-talkies and written channels: Line application, logbook , email</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team performance</li> <li>- Perceived opened communication</li> </ul>
Operative	<p><b>Perception of HRM held by organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A family-like working environment</li> <li>- Being proud of working with this hotel</li> </ul> <p><b>Perception of HRM held by department</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open communication</li> <li>- HODs as a role model</li> </ul>	<p><b>Knowledge sharing among employees</b>  Employees feel free and comfortable to talk and share their knowledge within team (during operational hours) and between departments (spontaneously)</p>	<p>A close relationship</p>

### 3.7.3 Cross-case Analysis

Building on the analysis from the five individual case studies, the researcher wanted to understand the complexity and situational uniqueness of each case in relation to the other case studies. Accordingly, Stake (2006) suggests that researchers have to provide interpretation across the cases by undertaking cross-case analysis of the studies. To undertake a cross-case analysis, the researcher began by doing a comparison of the themes which had emerged from the various levels of analysis from all the case studies (see Table 3.6). This helped expose the similarities and differences across the five case studies and allowed the researcher to sufficiently extend the conclusions from the data to begin to discern systematic patterns and interrelationships (Miles et al., 1994; Stake, 2006). To organize the data at this stage of analysis, the researcher created a display matrix of the comparisons, as shown in Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7** Comparison of HRM policies across the five case studies

Themes	Aster	Daisy	Rosemary	Yellow	Sunflower
To eliminate cost of management	√	√	√	√	√
To build a good team and close relationship	√	√	√	√	√
To deliver excellent services	√	√			
To deliver family-friendly services			√	√	√
To be in the top five hotels in Chiang Mai	√	√			

The similarities across the five case studies are of particular interest and value in capturing the central and shared aspects (Patton, 1990, p.172). Rowley (2002) suggests that the greater the number of case studies that show replication the greater the rigour of the results, and the more generalizable those results are. The findings from the data analysis are presented in Chapter 4: Research Findings. This was the first stage of the analysis, but it was not possible to develop an empirical framework. Chapter 5 provides a more critical analysis of the findings in line with the previous literature and the conceptual framework.

### **3.8 The Quality of Qualitative Research**

The quality of qualitative research, particularly case study research, is another issue associated with reliability and validity (Golafshani, 2003). Validity shows that the appropriate operational measures are considered for the concepts being studied, and reliability demonstrates the operation of the study (Rowley, 2002).

To ensure this study has validity, the researcher clarifies the standpoint of the study that HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour are hierarchical and involves social actors at various levels of organizations with different perceptions and experiences of HRM fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. The researcher determines the data to be collected, guided by a conceptual framework. There are three data sets required to understand the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour: 1) the employment of HRM practices to foster knowledge sharing; 2) the extent of knowledge sharing behaviour; and 3) respondents' perceptions of knowledge sharing as being facilitated or inhibited by HRM practices. The researcher employed multiple research methods and instruments to collect the data, semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and documentation (see Section 3.5: Research Methods and Instrument). The study initially examined the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in the previous literature, revealing that knowledge sharing is subjective (Chen and Cheng, 2012; Mueller, 2012; Lee et al., 2015; Wang and Noe, 2010) and individuals may or may not share their knowledge depending on their perceptions of HRM practices (Kim and Ko, 2014; Liu and Liu, 2011). In addition, perceptions and experiences of HRM fostering knowledge sharing behaviour differed at different levels of organizational actor. Therefore, this study used three interview question sets for the three levels of organizational actor, to capture the different perceptions of HRM fostering knowledge sharing behaviour at these levels of the organizational hierarchies. The findings of this study are informed by multiple views of respondents who created, implemented and perceived HRM practices. Triangulation of the research methods and data helped the researcher gather all the data and information required and search for convergence among different sources of information to form the themes of the

study. This helps to improve the validity and reliability of the research (Creswell, 2007).

Reliability is based on the stability and replicability of the research process and results. It ensures that the data collection can be repeated with the same results (Yin, 2014). To ensure the reliability of this study, the efficient selecting case studies, data collection and data analysis were developed. The study employs the case selection strategy of Stake (2006) to create criteria for selecting case studies in a multiple case study design (see Section 3.4.2: Selecting Case Studies). To ensure the researcher collected the same data and information from each case study, research instrument schedules were created (see Section 3.5: Research Methods and Instrument). Although the processes of collecting data were not in order and differed depending on the availability and convenience of the case study hotels and respondents, the researcher used checklists to ensure all the data and information were gathered. For the data analysis, although computer-assisted tools are recognized to increase the efficiency and systematics of qualitative data analysis (Saunders et al., 2012), the researcher followed Yin's (2014) suggestion and developed her own analytic strategies to analyse a diverse set of evidence gathered from multiple sources and at multiple levels. The analysis processes were replicated for all five case studies (see Section 3.7: Data Analysis).

The quality and reliability of case study research is related to the generalizability of the results (Patton, 2001). Generalization is based on replication logic. The number of case studies which can be shown to support the same theory add to the replication that can be claimed and the reliability of the results (Rowley, 2002). Responding to this issue, this study employs a multiple case study design which uses the logic of replication, and replicates the procedures for each case study to generate new knowledge (Yin, 2009). The study adopts cross-case analysis to compare the themes of research findings that emerge from each case study and generate replication of the results. This shows the rigour and quality of the research results (Rowley, 2002).

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are among the most important aspects of research, particularly when research involves human subjects. Generally, the term 'ethical' in research refers to a moral obligation to protect the research participants from harm and unnecessary invasion of privacy and the promotion of their wellbeing (Yin, 2014). Saunders et al. (2012) note that ethical concerns emerge when researchers plan and design research, attempt to access organizations or individuals, and collect, analyse, manage and report data. The stance of this study is interpretivist, and it aims to understand social phenomenon within organizations employing a case study approach. This obviously involves interaction with human participants. Therefore, this section clarifies the ethical considerations of the study and acknowledges the researcher's obligations and the rights of the participants.

Yin (2014) suggests that the researcher should plan to protect the human subjects who are going to be the research participants. The researcher reviewed the University's Code of Practice for Ethical Standards for Research Involving Human Participants and followed the research ethics processes and conditions laid down by Oxford Brookes University's Research Ethics Committee. The researcher received ethical approval for this research (see Appendix 8: Letter of Approval) before collecting the data.

There are three main ethical considerations including consent and voluntariness, protecting participants from harm, and privacy and anonymity (Yin, 2014). To ensure the study considered the protection of organizations and human participants with regards to consent, information and voluntariness (Yin, 2014), the researcher directly contacted the owners or hotel managers, explained an outline of the project and how it could be beneficial to the hotel, and asked if they were willing for their organization to be part of the research study. Once the owner or hotel manager agreed to be a case study, the permission forms were signed before undertaking the collection of primary data. The researcher asked the manager or owner to inform their employees about the research project. If employees were interested in participating, they were able to contact the researcher directly via email or phone. They could also contact the researcher through the HRM manager

of their organizations. The schedule of observations, including, dates, periods of time (during operational hours) and locations (back and front of house operations) were announced to all staff by the owner or manager. The researcher arranged the interviews and explained the project to the participants, asking them to read the participant information sheet. Once they agreed, they were asked to sign the consent form.

Another ethical consideration relates to protecting participants from harm, including physical harm, harm to participants' development and harm to career prospects (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This research topic is regarded as non-controversial (as agreed by Oxford Brookes University's Research Ethics Committee) because no commercially sensitive questions were asked during the interviews. The interviews were undertaken during daytime, in public spaces. All participation was entirely voluntary and the participants were able to withdraw from the research at any time without providing reasons. The participating hotels were asked to confirm in the participant information sheet that participation by their employees would be voluntary and would have no adverse effect on their employment.

The final issue is associated with privacy and anonymity. To protect the identity of the participants, the hotel names and all references to individuals, excluding job titles, have been anonymised. The names of the flowers and colour were chosen to replace each of the hotel names. There are Aster, Daisy, Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow. Copies of the agreement letter for participation were sent to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) for filing. During the fieldwork, the data was stored electronically in Google Drive (using Oxford Brookes University's email address). By storing data in Google Drive, the researcher was able to regularly upload and access the research data from various locations. This was useful while collecting primary data in Thailand. The data collected were treated as strictly confidential and securely stored in a locker, on the researcher's personal laptop and on a computer in the research suite at Oxford Brookes University. All storage sites were accessible by password only. The researcher removed all identifiers from the data in order to preserve participant anonymity.

### **3.10 Limitations of the Research Methodology**

The research stance is interpretivist, involving a multilevel research approach and a case study design. These approaches generate two main concerns, the complex and complicated nature of multiple level analysis and the generalizability of the results.

The first limitation is related to the multilevel research approach, which is increasingly sought in HRM research to explain the relationship between HRM practice and performance (Makela et al., 2014). The previous multilevel studies on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour (Minbaeva et al., 2012; Magnini, 2008), are dominated by quantitative methods. Theoretical research and papers on multilevel studies (Klein and Kozlowski, 2000; Sander et al., 2014) introduce appropriate strategies for collecting and analysing quantitative data. Some researchers, for example Renkema et al. (2016) and Makela et al. (2014), who undertake quantitative multilevel research, point out that in some instances qualitative research methods are appropriate for exploring the multilevel relationship of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour. Qualitative methods enable researchers to conduct holistic analysis and bring contextual richness to multilevel research, whereas quantitative approaches are less effective (Renkema et al., 2016; Makela et al., 2014). However, these studies do not advise on strategies or processes for analysis of complex sets of data collated from multilevel research. Saunders et al. (2012) suggest computer-assisted tools can help in the coding and categorizing of data. Yin (2014) argues that as the nature of case study research involves complex and diverse sets of evidence, researchers need to develop their own analytic strategies to deal with this and computerized tools cannot always handle this diverse array. This research involved difficult and complex data analysis for the researcher. The researcher developed her own analytic strategy to analyse the data and replicated it with all five case studies to ensure research quality. However, all the case studies are different and unique, making it difficult to replicate and ensure the results obtained are accurate. Researchers undertaking qualitative multilevel research need to devote time to develop valid and reliable measures and analyses (Wang and Noe, 2010).

The second limitation is associated with generalizability of the results. This study employs the multiple case study design using qualitative methods, which helps the researcher to conduct multilevel research effectively and gather rich data and information, bringing insight to the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations (Gray, 2014; Renkema et al., 2016; Makela et al., 2014). However, this study is conducted with only five SME boutique hotels located in Chiang Mai city, Thailand. The results are difficult to generalize or extend to all either boutique hotels in Chiang Mai or elsewhere because the study does not examine beyond this population.

### **3.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter clarifies the research methodology, ensuring it is suitable and contributes to acceptable knowledge. It revises the research aim, 'to explore the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in Thai boutique hotels' and the research objectives. The chapter clarifies the research philosophy and the approach adopted. The researcher views HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour as subjective and socially constructed by hotel managers or owners, heads of hotel department and operational employees. Therefore, the researcher's philosophical stance is defined as interpretivist.

The chapter identifies the research approach based on the research philosophy and the limitations of previous studies. The previous literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour is dominated by deductive, quantitative investigations, which do not provide sufficient evidence to explain how or why HRM achieves these effects (Kim and Ko, 2014). Since the relationship between HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour within organizations is subjective and based on the social interactions between people at various levels of organizational hierarchies, in-depth organizational studies are needed involving multiple levels of investigation (Klein and Kozlowski, 2000; Renkema et al., 2016) in order to capture people's perceptions of how HRM fosters their knowledge sharing behaviour. This research employs inductive qualitative research and a case study approach to exploring the multilevel relationships and processes of organizational phenomena. One



consideration when applying a case study approach is the number of cases. The chapter discusses the nature of single and multiple case studies and shows that multiple case studies are preferable in order to represent the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in Thai boutique hotels.

The chapter discusses the strategy and criteria for selecting case studies based on the research aim and objectives, and shows that the case studies provide diversity and opportunities to explore the complexity and multiple levels of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour. Having identified the case study criteria, the chapter clarifies the research methods, which are qualitative and include face-to-face semi-structured interview, non-participant observation and documentation. As parts of the research method identification, the development of the research instruments, interview questions and observation schedules, are discussed. Data collection processes are clarified, and divided into two stages, the pilot and the main study. The pilot study was conducted to refine the research instruments, verify the data collection methods and ensure the processes are appropriate. This is good practice to ensure the researcher can collate rich data and information when undertaking the main study. The processes of data analysis are identified and the quality of qualitative research clarified. Finally, the ethical considerations and research limitations are presented.

## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

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The chapter presents the findings from the fieldwork data collection stage of the research, involving multiple sources of data including relevant HRM documentation, non-participant observation (in public places) and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with staff, working at various levels, from the 5 boutique hotels in Chiang Mai.

This chapter is separated into two parts. Part 1 presents the findings from each case study. There are five case studies including the Aster, Daisy, Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow the Aster, Daisy, Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow and Part 2 analyses the findings across the five case study hotels. Thus, the researcher explores the complexity and situational uniqueness of each case in relation to the others. This chapter is the first stage of the analysis, which continues in Chapter 5. The findings from the next stage of analysis seek to determine whether the research question has been answered.

## **PART 1: A SINGLE CASE ANALYSIS**

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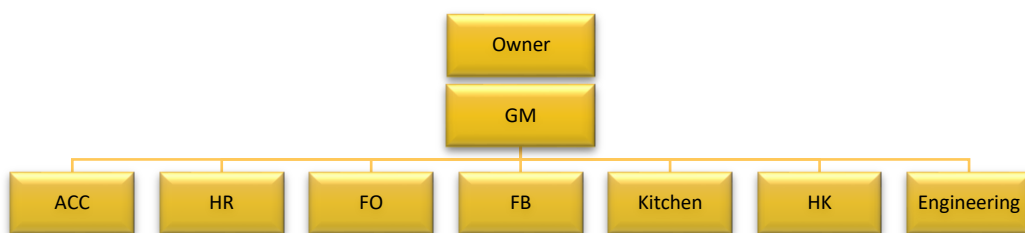
The previous chapter has presented the characteristics of each case studies (shown in Table 3.1 p.107) Therefore, Part 1 of this chapter presents the analysis of a single case study and is structured in three sections. The first is an exploration of HRM at various levels of analysis. HRM at organizational level refers to HRM practices which are used across the entire organization, either by HRM managers or senior managers; HRM at departmental level refers to HRM practices which are implemented or used by HODs or senior employees within the departments and HRM at operational level refers to the experiences and perceptions of HRM by operative employees. The second section presents the patterns and contexts of knowledge sharing practices and behaviour at the various level of analysis. Organizational knowledge sharing behaviour is associated with the practices of knowledge sharing across each entire organization, both horizontally and vertically. Departmental knowledge sharing behaviour refers to the practices of members in each department sharing knowledge among themselves. At the operational level, knowledge sharing behaviour refers to individual knowledge sharing behaviour (how and why employees share their knowledge). The final section is a summary of findings in each case study.

## Case study 1: The Aster Hotel

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The Aster Hotel is the newest boutique hotel among the case study organizations, being 2 years old. The hotel has 30 guest rooms and employs 60 people. There are 7 divisions, Accounting (ACC), Human Resources (HR), Front Office (FO), Restaurant (FB), Kitchen, Housekeeping (HK) and Engineering. It is managed by a Thai national management company with financing from Singaporean investors, who jointly share the benefits.

**Figure 4.1** Aster Hotel organization chart



**Source:** information collected from the Aster Hotel by the researcher (2017)

This hotel aims for ‘personalized passionate service by a dedicated professional team offering tailor made memorable experiences. To emphasize the achievements of the hotel, the feedback from customers submitted to popular websites such as Tripadvisor and booking.com shows that customers appreciate the prices and are satisfied with the services provided. The Aster has been rewarded several prizes for excellence, such as Luxury New Hotel, South East Asia by the World Luxury Hotel Awards; International Hotel & Property Award for Design (Hotels under 50 rooms) by the International Hotel & Property Awards; and Winner of Love of Local Award by Small Luxury Hotels of the World Awards (AD1: hotel website).

### **HRM at different levels of analysis**

#### **At the organizational level**

The analysis of HRM practices at the organizational level shows several HRM practices, particularly team-based HRM practices, being used by the HRM manager for the entire organization. These practices are concerned with developing good teamwork. Peer interview is used to ensure that the teams select candidates who fit

with them (AF1) using a two-day orientation. The first day is dedicated to team building activities and the second day is for sharing organizational knowledge, such as hotel and product information and job knowledge. There are social activities, such as a monthly corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity which is used for marketing purposes and also for building the team. It is evident that HRM practice, such as performance appraisal by team members, contributes to the sense of belonging to a team; one criteria of the employee of the month is helping others both within the own and in other teams (AU2).

The evidence shows that the Aster Hotel focuses on training and development in relation to delivering tailor made services, creating monthly training and development activities which are run by the HRM manager (AD2 : annual training and activities schedules). In order to encourage employees (both management and operational) to improve their performance, an individual based-rewards system (bonus and compensation) is used. The operational employees collect training hours (5 hours per week) and the training can be undertaken either within the department or across departments (AO2, AO3). The HODs have to provide these training activities. However, this intention does not seem to work for HODs.

*'Some HODs are aware of this bonus but most of them are not concerned. I have to push and remind them to do this training (15 minute -training)' (HRM manager).*

There are HRM practices, such as a monthly mystery checks, inspections of management on duty and internal and external audits, being regularly undertaken at the Aster to ensure their employees are delivering a high quality of service with service quality controls (AF1). The evidence shows the Aster requires employees who are willing to work at multiple tasks, and assigns employees to do cross-training between departments, as the HR manager mentioned:

*'One of my considerations is employee attitude towards working on multiple tasks. The candidates will be told as our hotel is a small hotel and limited number of staff, they will have to be responsible for many duties - how do they feel about that? '.*

### **At the departmental level**

At departmental level, three heads of department, FO, FB and Housekeeping, were interviewed. The evidence shows that all of them implement HRM policy at organizational level, such as core qualifications and selection processes, 15 minute training activities, work design (including teamwork and multi-tasking) and performance appraisal by team members.

*'I asked the HRM manager about the preferred qualifications of newcomers and she said, as you know our hotel is a trendy and modern hotel, I don't mind if a newcomer is inexperienced or just graduated. The most important thing is they should have a positive attitude, be friendly and flexible not like a robot' (Restaurant manager).*

Some HRM practices are employed differently in each department, depending on the HOD's experience and the nature of the department. The findings show that work design, namely multiple tasks and job rotation, is found in the FO and FB departments but not in the HK department where specific skilled employees are needed who know the guest room details well. The HK manager stated:

*'I can better fix the roster for room attendant to work on their floor because they know each room's details well. This helps them to work comfortably and productively' (HK manager).*

It is evident that there are a variety of training techniques and methods employed in each department. The study shows that role play, job rotation and short training sessions are used in the FB department; briefings on SOPs, product knowledge and brainstorming are used in the FO department; and Q&A sessions are mainly used in the HK department. In addition, all HODs use one-to-one coaching techniques to fix weak points individually (this practice is hotel policy). They frequently remind their team members of the organizational culture which involves work substitution and multiple tasks.

*'We always remind our team that everyone has to be prepared to be a work substitute for others as we are a team' (Restaurant manager).*

All participants at departmental level (AU1, AU2 and AU3) consider open communication and a family-like relationships such as a sister-brother relationship to be important in building good teams.

*'I am open with them first, like a family member and eventually they feel free to share everything with me which is good for working together as a team'* (HK manager).

*'When we work together, I behave like their brother'* (Restaurant manager).

### **At the operational level**

The analysis of the findings at operational level indicate that HRM practices at both organizational and departmental level, particularly collaborative HRM practices and the friendliness of line managers, establish close relationships within teams and a family-like working environment. This makes employees feel free and comfortable to talk and share within and between departments. Evidence from the participant observations (AOB1-3) included examples where staff informal communication resulted in knowledge sharing. In one case in the Aster a Room Attendant's friendly talk with a waitress about customer behaviour tallied with the Room Attendant stating in her interview, *'we all are friendly, open-minded, and sharing. I feel like a family here'*. Similarly, a waitress perceived HRM practice such as social activities as establishing a close relationship, saying:

*'I know no one here [...] my supervisor suggested I join the orientation days. It was fun. We (all hotel staff) did many activities together. Since then I feel more comfortable working here [...] I work with him in all shifts, we were assigned and rotated to work together. This makes me feel comfortable to ask questions and talk to him'* (Waitress).

The HRM practices, such as regular meetings and briefings and performance appraisals by team members, aim to support tailor made services and lead to open communication that fosters a climate where employees share their knowledge. The role of the HOD is significant, as one employee (AO2) states that, in meetings, the

HOD talks openly, sharing everything about both their life and work. They see the HOD as a role model and their reference point which makes the employees willing to share their knowledge in the meetings, as one said, *'I do not hesitate to talk about what I think should not be shared as HK manager also even shares her life with us in the meetings'* (A01).

Open communication and feedback within service quality control, such as scores from mystery dining and audits, motivates employees to share their knowledge (coaching and mentoring each other), in order to meet service standards and achieve a higher hotel ranking (AU2, A01).

*'I show the feedback and score at 96% from the external audits and I think this encourages my staff to help each other correct their performance in order to hit 100%'* (Restaurant manager).

Within service quality control, HODs randomly check product and service knowledge to encourage employees to share their knowledge within the team (AU2).

*'We have to prepare ourselves to be ready for the Q&A check by sharing and discussing our knowledge with the team'* (Waitress).

### **Knowledge sharing behaviour and practice**

In delivering tailor made services, the Aster Hotel is concerned about knowledge sharing, in particular customer knowledge and quality control comments. There are several activities and events for communicating and sharing all kinds of knowledge. Knowledge, in particular organizational knowledge such as hotel performance, hotel vision and missions, is shared across the hotel in GM meetings twice a year and general monthly meetings hosted by the HRM manager. These meetings provide opportunities for the management team and employees to meet and share knowledge, such as hotel performance (hotel ranking and financial position), customer feedback and team performance, in order to improve the hotel's overall performance (AF1). The IT system is used to record customer history and the management team and senior employees are able to log in to this system (AU2).



The findings reveal that knowledge is routinely shared in the morning briefings among the GM and HODs and those messages are relayed to team members. Knowledge is shared regularly during daily operational routines and in person. Customer knowledge, specifically customer behaviour, is casually shared within the departments in lunch breaks or just walking past each other as observed by the researcher in the restaurant. Additionally, the waitress also comment that;

*'A room maid informs me about a customer in room XXX who drinks a lot of water, like 4 bottles a day. She also suggests I should remember this point when this customer comes for breakfast'* (Waitress).

Employees are likely to be more concerned with organizational performance than individual or team performance. *'They are not HK's customers but they are the hotel's customers'* (Room attendant).

The evidence shows that knowledge is shared regularly within the departments. There are several knowledge-sharing activities, such as morning briefings (found in FO and HK departments), 15 minute training sessions, briefings in the afternoons (found in all departments), and 'walkie-talkies' in which everyone hears the same message (A03). These activities provide opportunities for teams to be informed and share the same set of information and messages (AU2). In the departments that do not have morning briefings such as FB, a mobile application called 'Line', is used to communicate customer information, job assignments and job knowledge among team members.

*'We do not have a morning briefing like other departments, but we communicate and share information via Line and I then remind team members to check up on Line again'* (Restaurant manager).

The findings emphasize how the Aster Hotel prioritizes knowledge sharing. The participants, at all levels of the organization, use both face-to-face communication and written communication such as email, Line, logbooks and information boards to ensure that knowledge and information are sent, shared and received. The HRM manager claims that the Line application is one of the most effective communication channels as it is fast and provides the ability to leave messages for the intended recipients. Similarly, the Restaurant manager uses this mobile communication

application to share information with his team, as he said, *'I send them all information via Line and also talk to them in person to make sure that they got the message and understand it'*.

Written communication, for example logbooks and Line are found to be particularly helpful when team members are busy and do not have time to talk or share information.

*'We prefer sharing in person to reading from the logbook. However, the logbook is helpful when we are busy and no one has time to even talk. I can read from the logbook instead'* (FO manager).

The findings indicate performance orientation, for example eliminating work errors drives employees to share their knowledge.

*'Sharing and talking help us understand each other that is easy to work as a team [...] we have to share and talk, if not, how can we fix work errors?'* (Room attendant).

Likewise, the FO manager stated, *'we share our ideas to figure out the best way to solve problems'*. The employees perceive that sharing knowledge is part of teamwork and helps them work more easily. One participant stated that *'communicating and sharing helps to do work much easier'* (AU1).

### **Summary for the Aster Hotel**

It can be seen that HRM (intention, policies and practices) at both organizational and departmental levels, are appropriately formulated with the hotel vision which claims to offer 'personalized passionate service by a dedicated professional team offering tailor made memorable experiences'. Several HRM practices aim to build effective teamwork. These include team-based HRM practices, team building and social activities, open communication and a family relationship within the workplace which helps develop a family-like working environment and a willingness to share knowledge (both organizational and individual) within and between departments (see Table 4.1).

The study found that HRM intentions and practices at organizational level, such as quality control, training and activities, effective communications, and individual-based rewards systems are designed to develop and support employees to deliver tailor made services. These practices not only provide opportunities to share knowledge but also encourage the management team and operational employees to share knowledge horizontally and vertically, as well as synchronously and asynchronously, in order to improve individual performance (service performance) and organizational performance (a higher hotel ranking).

At departmental level, HODs flexibly adopt HRM policies which emerge at organizational level, depending on the nature of each department. The HODs introduce a variety of training activities and techniques, such as short briefings, role plays, job rotation and one-to-one coaching. These practices provide opportunities for sharing knowledge within a department and also make HODs role models in knowledge sharing with team members.

**Table 4.1** HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour at the Aster Hotel

Levels of analysis	HRM	Knowledge sharing behaviour
Organization	<p><b>Intention 1 : Build effective teamwork</b>  <u>Policies and practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A peer interview to ensure selecting the right employee who fits with the team</li> <li>- Orientation programmes concerning team building</li> <li>- Peer review of performance appraisals</li> <li>- Monthly social activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention 2 : Delivering a tailor made service</b>  <u>Policies and practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality control</li> <li>- Monthly training and activities for entire hotel</li> <li>- Individual-based rewards system</li> <li>- Effective communication</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention 3: Limit of resources</b>  <u>Policies and practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multiple task work design</li> <li>- Cross-training</li> </ul>	<p><b>Across hotel</b>  Regularly share organizational knowledge in activities and events such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GM meetings</li> <li>- Monthly meetings</li> <li>- IT system (guest history)</li> <li>- Email and Line application</li> <li>- Notice boards</li> </ul> <p><b>Between departments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Routinely share organizational knowledge in morning briefing and daily operational hours</li> <li>- Spontaneously share customer behaviour knowledge</li> </ul> <p><b>Reasons for sharing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organizational performance</li> <li>- Parts of job responsibility</li> <li>- Organizational culture</li> </ul>
Departments	<p>HODs flexibly adopt HRM policies and practices emerging at organizational level depending on the nature of each departments</p> <p><b>Intention 1: Build effective teamwork</b>  <u>Policies and practices</u></p>	<p><b>Within department</b>  Both organizational and individual knowledge is shared regularly during operational routines via</p>

Levels of analysis	HRM	Knowledge sharing behaviour
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open communications</li> <li>- A sister-brother relationship</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention 2: Delivering a tailor-made service</b></p> <p><u>Policies and practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Variety of training techniques such as short briefings, role plays, job rotation, and one-to-one coaching</li> <li>- HODs working with teams</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Face-to-face talks, team briefings, training activities, walkie-talkies</li> <li>2. Written channels, Line application, logbooks, email</li> </ol> <p><b>Reasons for sharing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team performance</li> <li>- Perceived opened communication</li> </ul>
Operations	<p><b>Perception of HRM held by organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A family-like working environment (knowing everyone in the hotel)</li> <li>- Being proud of working with the hotel</li> </ul> <p><b>Perception of HRM held by departments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open communication</li> <li>- HODs as role models</li> </ul>	<p><b>Knowledge sharing among employees</b></p> <p>Employees feel free and comfortable to talk and share their knowledge within teams (during operational hours) and between departments (spontaneously)</p> <p><b>Reasons for sharing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A close relationship</li> <li>- HODs as role models of sharing</li> <li>- Self-benefit (performance orientation)</li> <li>- Organizational benefit (achieving high hotel ranking)</li> </ul>

## Case study 2: Daisy Hotel

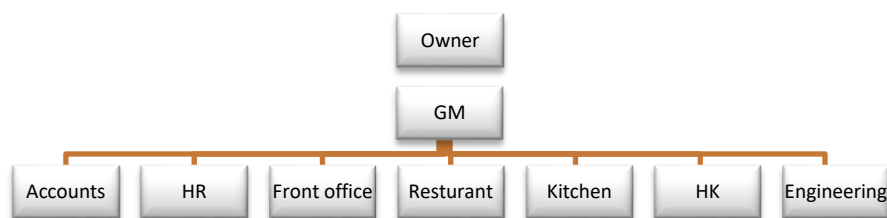
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The Daisy Hotel is a modern, 55 guest rooms boutique hotel, owned by a Thai national and operated by a Thai management company. There are 72 employees working in 7 departments. It considers itself to be a small and simply structured boutique hotel with a standardized management system, as the Engineering manager commented:

*'Although we adopt some of the management systems from Shangri-La Hotel, we cut the multi-tier levels of management off since it may waste time and resources. Here, higher ranks and operational staff can get in touch directly'.*

The evidence from the participant information (Appendix 7) shows that the management team, including the GM and HODs, have been working at the Daisy Hotel for less than a year, and all have experience at big chain hotels.

**Figure 4.2** Daisy Hotel organization chart



**Source:** information collected from the Daisy Hotel by the researcher (2017)

### HRM at different levels of analysis

The analysis of HRM reveals that some HRM practices, such as selection, job design, work design, training and social activities, may influence knowledge sharing behaviour. These HRM practices are performed and experienced differently by different levels of participant.

### **At the organizational level**

The findings show that HRM policy and practices are appropriately formulated to fit with the hotel's vision, which claims to provide 'unmistakable service excellence'. Most HRM policies concern training and development with support from the General Manager and the management company.

*'As we are a boutique hotel, the customers expect to get excellent services from us. At this point, we are concerned with training and development in order to enhance our employee ability to deliver a high quality of service' (HRM manager).*

In relation to training and development, the Daisy Hotel selects employee candidates who are teachable, flexible, and willing to learn.

*'I always talk to the HODs about the selection strategy [...] you should select someone who is trainable then train them to help our hotel [...] If you found any of their skills need to be improved, create a development action plan and let me know[...]' (General Manager).*

Due to the limitations of the hotel's budget, the HRM manager promotes internal training, particularly on-the-job training, as their main technique. The Daisy Hotel aims to produce employees who can multitask by rotating them into different roles so they experience all the functions within their department.

*'Most of the training is internal and informal, as it requires a smaller budget since we can utilize the hotel's resources [...]. Since we have few staff, they will be rotated to work in all functions within their departments [...]' (HRM manager).*

The findings reveal that the Daisy Hotel uses a standard operating procedure (SOP) developed by a management company that claims it is an excellent service development tool. New employees receive the SOP on the day of their interview which means they have to know and understand their job before starting work at the Daisy.

*'We give the SOP to the newcomers before they start working with us [...] so that they will understand their job and this helps them to learn quickly'*  
(HRM manager).

The SOP not only provides employees with a job description and operating procedures, but promotes knowledge and information sharing practices among team members. The SOP for guest service agents (GSAs) states: 'Ensure that information is transferred from shift to shift', and the SOP for Spa Therapists says: 'Take a note of pending things on the Logbook'. These quotes show that the Daisy Hotel is aware of knowledge and information sharing practices that enhance service quality.

The Daisy Hotel exhibits strong HRM practices that establish employee relationships, as well as providing a family atmosphere. This can be seen in the practices used in selecting employees. The Daisy Hotel mostly employs candidates who have friends or relatives working in the hotel. The Daisy also has the HODs cooking day for staff in order to establish employee relationships. The participant observation evidence collected at the Daisy identified HODs cooking for staff to reinforce the family experience of working at the hotel (DOB5). Furthermore, HRM practice also creates a programme of social activities, for example staff parties, monthly meetings with the GM, and team building activities as evident from HRM manager's comments;

*'[...] we try to provide a family environment where all are free to talk and discuss [...] annually, we also hold team building activities (such as voluntary activities or donations) which their family members are able to join, so they can get along better with others'* (HRM manager).

### **At the departmental level**

The Daisy Hotel delegates HRM responsibilities to HODs as line managers. This is because the management found that HODs and their staff have a closer relationship. Therefore, HODs hold full authority in selecting and educating new employees, running training, consulting with employees and evaluating staff performance.

*'HODs know their staff better than me so we, (GM and I), only guide HODs with a broad framework. HODs hold full authority in implementing all HRM into practices within their departments' (HRM manager).*

Although most practices are aligned with HRM at the organizational level, they are adopted differently by the heads of each department, particularly training and development techniques. The adopted HRM practices differ in each department depending on the nature of the department and the HOD's experience. For example, most departments, such as the Front office, FB, Housekeeping and Finance use multitask-based training which trains employees by rotating them to work in all positions within the department. However, this strategy cannot be employed in departments which need specific skilled employees, such as the kitchen.

*'Each position has its own working standard and system [...] the Commis chefs are not allowed to cover for Chef de parties. He may only handle the basic functions' (Head chef).*

Interestingly, all HODs have previously worked for several years with international hotel chains. They apply their experience to training techniques, for example, the Food and beverage (FB) manager uses a 'trainer and trainee' programme. Each week, one member of staff is assigned to be a trainer and train the others in the FB department. The training topic is mainly related to enhancing job knowledge, such as food and beverage ingredients or how to make drinks. The FO manager uses the 'brainstorming' technique to encourage employees to share their knowledge and experiences about how to deal with customers and customer complaints.

*'Idea sharing is accepted by our hotel because nobody should insist on their opinion since no one is absolutely right. My beverages formula can be changed if another better formula is accepted after the trial of staff' (FB manager).*

HODs also apply their experience to their management styles, making them more empowering managers. They give employees the authority to do their own jobs and make decisions under the HOD's monitoring. In addition, they



observe the training techniques employed and listen to employee opinions.

*'I let staff discuss and report to me [...] by letting them work freely and with less totalitarian control, staff are encouraged to initiate new things with confidence'* (Engineering manager).

### **At the operational level**

The findings show that referral-based selection and informal orientation provide a warm welcome and make it less awkward for newcomers, as one said, *'my friends are working here so I am not alone [...]. HR showed me around and existing staff also greet me with a warm smile'*. Socialization activities, for example team building, staff parties and GM meetings, provide a family atmosphere at the Daisy Hotel. Employees are familiar with their team members and enjoy close relationships with their managers. These HRM practices reinforce willingness to knowledge share.

*'We like this family-like atmosphere that fosters an environment of close communication for all [...] we (team members and supervisors) can talk and share everything regarding both our work and personal life'* (Senior waitress).

The findings reveal that HRM practices, especially training and development (department training), and work design (job rotation and teamwork) provide opportunities and encourage employees to share their knowledge with the support of HODs. Employees find training and development essential to reduce work errors, deliver good quality service (DO3) and gain new knowledge (DO1 and DO2) as well as being useful for their future careers. A new waitress said, *'I prefer training on this multitasks basis because it is an advantage in the enhancement of the multi-skills and knowledge which is useful for my future career'*. This intrinsic motivation (goal orientation and self-worth) encourages them to share their ideas, experiences and knowledge during the training.

The training activities not only provide employees with knowledge sharing opportunities, they also enhance employee knowledge sharing ability. For example, in the 'trainer and trainee' programme applied in the FB department, the assigned trainers prepare themselves with both the necessary knowledge and ability to be a trainer. The 'brainstorming' technique which the FO manager uses to encourage staff to share and discuss case studies of customer complaints also enhances the ability for knowledge sharing among teams.

*'I think the FO manager knows that I am a newcomer so she kept asking me questions in the brainstorming meeting. Now I feel more confident in discussing and sharing my experience and knowledge' (GSA).*

In practice, an empowering management style results in job autonomy for employees. They are able to work flexibly and independently (using the SOP as a guideline) with supervision from line managers. This encourages employees to share their knowledge freely and provides a knowledge sharing environment with the support of line managers.

*'Staff here have been working independently with less intervention from supervisors [...]. All staff are learners and teachers of the hotel so on my shift, my co-worker and I always share and discuss our knowledge and experiences especially for guest assistant matters' (GSA 2).*

### **Knowledge sharing practice and behaviour**

The findings reveal that knowledge is shared regularly across the organization by participants at all levels, in particular between departmental and operational levels and among employees in working time. In the General Manager meeting, the owner and General Manager share hotel information, general information and the hotel roles with HODs and operational employees. This situation provides an opportunity for staff at all levels to share their ideas and opinions. Organizational and departmental level staff have morning briefings where guest knowledge, customer complaints, the business situation and general information is shared. Further examples of widespread knowledge sharing at the Daisy hotel were evident when

the researcher was greeted by the security officer with the following comments *'the FO manager told me this morning that you (the researcher) are coming so I know who you are'* (DOB7).

HODs share their working experiences and techniques (how-to), and job related-knowledge with operational employees at daily meetings and through informal on-the-job training. They also discuss and share knowledge and ideas when they launch new products (food and beverage menus), develop service processes and solve customer problems. HODs adopt a sister-brother relationship when communicating and working together, which makes employees feel comfortable talking and sharing their knowledge while working with the HODs. An Engineer said, *'we were fixing a fridge and my supervisor, who I call Phi (elder brother), not boss, told me that we are team. I can ask and share whatever I would love to know without any hesitation'*.

Evidence from the participant observations at the hotel lobby provides examples where people work collaboratively, sharing customer knowledge and operational knowledge during the daily routine (DOB1). In addition, operational employees share operational knowledge and customer behaviour knowledge during daily operational time by face-to-face communication. Important or serious information regarding customer requests or complaints is recorded in the logbook (report) as the General Manager commented, *'Though the formal communication is email, I prefer talk and discussion since it can foster two-way communication among us'* (General Manager).

The findings of the case study identify wide use of open communication within the organization. Even confidential information, such as the financial and business situation, is shared with all levels of employee at the GM meeting. Although the Daisy Hotel uses both one and two-way communication, face-to-face conversation is the preferred channel. The mobile application Line is widely used to share information, in particular pictorial information. This mobile application is mainly used at the organizational and departmental level during working time, as management are allowed to use mobile phones during working time whereas

operational employees only use Line at rest times. The participants at all levels claim that Line is a fast and thorough method of sharing information within the Daisy Hotel.

### **Summary for the Daisy Hotel**

In conclusion, the Daisy Hotel exhibits a strong commitment to enhancing excellence in service quality through initiatives and HRM practices including, competency-based selection, job design (SOP), work design (rotation and teamwork) and multitask-based training and development. The hotel tries to foster a family working environment by employing referral-based selection and offering social activities such as staff parties and monthly meetings with the General Manager.

HRM practices are delegated to the heads of department and, as such, they hold full responsibility to implement HRM in practice. The heads of department deploy most of the HRM practices (selection, job design, work design, socialization activities) that emerge at organizational level (see Table 4.2). However, training and development activities are implemented differently in each department depending on the nature of the department, employee skills and the HOD's experience.

Analysing the findings at the operational level reveals that HRM practices, namely referral-based selection and social activities, establish a family working environment and close teamwork which, in turn, promotes knowledge sharing behaviour within the small boutique hotel. The study found that work design, specifically rotation, not only develops multitask skilled employees but also provides opportunities for employees to learn and share experiences and knowledge in all functions within a department (Mueller, 2012). The findings highlight how informal training and development, held by line managers, seems to be an effective practice for fostering knowledge sharing behaviour at the Daisy. Employees perceive this practice as fulfilling their intrinsic motivation and performance goal orientation, reducing work errors, improving customer satisfaction and gaining new knowledge for their future careers. This encourages employees to share their ideas, experiences and knowledge during training as part

of developing their own knowledge and performance in the workplace. Training activities not only provide employees with opportunities to share their knowledge, they enhance employee ability in knowledge sharing.

**Table 4.2** HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in the Daisy Hotel

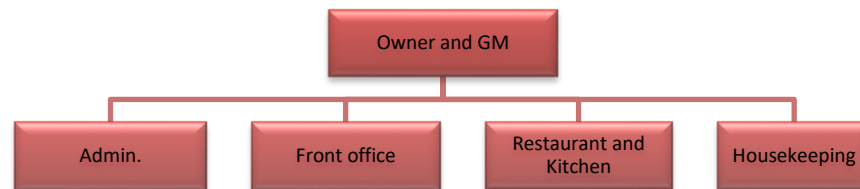
Levels of analysis	HRM	Knowledge sharing behaviour
Organization	<p><b>Intention 1 : Delivering service excellence</b>  <u>Policies and practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classroom training hosted by management company</li> <li>- Selecting teachable and flexible people</li> <li>- Monthly training activities (for each department)</li> <li>- SOP and quality control</li> <li>- Effective communication</li> <li>- On-the-job training</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention 2: Functional flexibility</b>  <u>Policies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multiple task and rotation work design</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention 3 : building a family-like working atmosphere</b>  <u>Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular social activities/team building</li> </ul>	<p><b>Across hotel</b>  Regularly shared organizational knowledge in activities and events such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GM meetings</li> <li>- Monthly meetings</li> <li>- Email and Line application</li> <li>- Notice boards</li> </ul> <p><b>Between departments</b>  Routinely shared organizational knowledge in morning briefings and daily operational hours</p> <p><b>Reasons for sharing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organizational performance</li> <li>- Part of job/responsibility</li> <li>- Organizational culture</li> <li>- Perceived a family-like working environment</li> </ul>
Departments	<p>Although, HODs hold full authority for HRM in their department, they mainly adopt HRM's intentions and policies created at organizational level.</p> <p><b>Intention 1 : Delivering service excellence under the hotel' s limitations and nature of each department</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multiple task and rotation work design</li> <li>- Interactive training : Q&amp;A sessions, brainstorming and homework</li> <li>- Coaching and mentoring</li> <li>- Empowerment</li> <li>- HODs working together with teams</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention 2 : Building a family-like working atmosphere</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Referral-based selection</li> <li>- Sister- brother relationship</li> </ul>	<p><b>Within department</b>  Both organizational and individual knowledge is shared regularly during operational routines via</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face-to-face communication: team briefings, training activities, walkie-talkies</li> <li>- Written channels: logbook , email, and Line application</li> </ul> <p><b>Reasons for sharing (HOD and team members)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team performance</li> <li>- Knowledge sharing environment</li> <li>- Perceived open communication</li> <li>- Perceived family-like working environment</li> </ul>
Operations	<p><b>Perception of HRM held by organization</b>  Social activities and team building introduce a family-like working environment, open communication and a willingness for knowledge sharing</p> <p><b>Perception of HRM held by HOD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perceived family-like working environment</li> <li>- Perceived opportunities for sharing, fulfil intrinsic motivations and enhance knowledge sharing ability</li> <li>- Empowerment creates job autonomy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Knowledge sharing among employees</b>  Employees are willing to share their knowledge within teams. Knowledge sharing between teams happens when asked</p> <p><b>Reasons for sharing (among employees)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perceived family-like working environment</li> <li>- Perceived self and team benefit</li> <li>- Perceived abilities of sharing</li> <li>- Perceived autonomy of sharing</li> <li>- Responsibility</li> </ul>

### Case study 3: Rosemary Hotel

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The Rosemary Hotel is over ten years old and has 34 guest rooms and 34 employees. There are 4 main departments: Administration including Finance, Accounting and HR, Front office (FO), Restaurant and Kitchen (FB) and Housekeeping (HK). It is a family business managed by the owner who is also the General Manager (see Figure 4.3). Most participants (RF1, RU1, RU2, and RO1) mentioned that the Rosemary focuses on delivering family friendly services rather than offering distinct tangible products such as hotel and guest room design or decoration (RF1). To illustrate this point, the HR assistant said, *'our property is just a basic design but we are more concerned with delivering a family friendly service'*.

**Figure 4.3** Rosemary Hotel organization chart



**Source:** information collected from the Rosemary hotel by the researcher (2017)

### HRM at different levels of analysis

#### At the organizational level

The multilevel analysis of HRM reveals there is no HRM manager in this hotel. HRM intentions and policies are created by the owner and senior employees but only the rewards and compensation system are implemented by the owner across the entire organization. The other HRM policies are implemented by line managers in their departments with support from administration regarding HRM documentation.

It is evident that the HRM intention is to shape employees into the Rosemary 'character' which is friendly and sharing. The selection policy tends to result in the hiring of employees who have people skills, a positive attitude towards working in multiple roles and a willingness to help others (AF1, AU1). The job probation period is considered vital in transforming employees into true team players who represent

the Rosemary. The FO manager said, *'in the probation period, we are willing to work hard to feed newcomers all our knowledge and expertise to build them into a Rosemary employee'*. The probation period covers 3 months and the employee, who is an internal hiring, has to ensure that she gets along with her new team and has the knowledge and ability to work effectively in her new department (R01).

The Rosemary Hotel, working within its limitations of being a small hotel with financial constraints, builds a family working environment. Referral-based selection practices are the main recruitment strategy (Appendix 7). A waiter said, *'most of us know each other before coming to work here'*. When it comes to decision making about selection, all the team members work together to select candidates who are able to be good team players and get along with each other.

*'It was either the HOD or senior staff who interviewed the candidates. They also made decisions whether to employ that candidate'* (HR assistant).

#### **At the departmental level**

As mentioned, HODs hold full authority for HRM in their departments (except rewards and compensation), and the implementation of HRM is based on the nature of each department. All departments seek to provide good service in a family-like working atmosphere. They hire employees who have people skills rather than lots of experience (RF1 and RU1). Language skills, in particular a good command of English, and a positive attitude towards working multiple roles are the core qualifications for the front of house employees (FO and FB).

*'We are looking for a team member who has communication abilities, is friendly, and gets along with us. These people are easier to transform to be Rosemary employees than those who have a lot of experience'* (FO manager).

Due to it being a small hotel, there are a small number of employees working in each department (4-8) and these employees take on multiple tasks in all departments. All employees are able to work in all functions within a department. A waiter said, *'we are only 4-5 in a restaurant, so we work the same tasks and help each other as one*

*team'*. All departments rotate the team members to work in all functions and shifts (morning and evening). This provides opportunities for employees to meet each other and gain experience in all tasks.

*'I arrange the work roster so that everyone has a chance to meet and work together [...] morning shift is rotated to work within the evening shift for example'* (FO manager).

In the Housekeeping department, all employees take a shift break together which they claim provides opportunities for them to meet and share knowledge regarding their work problems and customer behaviour. Participant observation verified this opportunity for knowledge sharing where a group of 3-4 housekeepers were having lunch in staff canteen and were talking about the type and number of fruits that customers took from the fruit baskets. A senior room attendant also stated that *'We do not have time to talk and meet each other during the operational times. We all meet and talk in our lunch break or after work'*

In terms of training and development, apart from hands-on training during the probation period for newcomers, there are no training activities in the Rosemary Hotel. The findings reveal several techniques being used to train newcomers during their job probation, such as fostering sister-brother relationships, hands on intervention from HODs and other team members and job rotation (found in FB). Organizational knowledge is shared during the probation period, for example work procedures (how to do the job), core values of service (friendly family service) and the organizational culture (helping and sharing).

*'I was taught to help others since my first day here, when my tasks are finished I have to help others. It happened automatically'* (Senior room attendant).

### **At operational level**

A warm welcome for the newcomer promotes close relationships within teams, as one GSA said, *'I was very pleased on my first day here. They all welcomed me and talk to me like my sister and since then we are so close to each other'*.



It is evident the sister-brother relationship, coaching and mentoring of each other (within a department) during the daily operational routine (RU1) establishes teamwork and leads people to feel free to talk and share with one another in order to reduce work errors and deliver consistent service.

*'There are no reasons for hesitating to talk and help to remind and check other's work. We are like sisters-brothers here'* (RO1).

A few HRM activities are provided for the entire organization, such as an annual meeting and staff party (twice a year) and one system of compensation and rewards, the organizational-based rewards system (RF1). However, this practice promotes a less competitive atmosphere in the Rosemary Hotel. A waiter mentioned that *'everyone got the same number of bonuses every year [...] the owner considers the bonus by hotel rankings on TripAdvisor or Expedia [...] We work together, not compete against each other to get a higher bonus'* (RO3).

### **Knowledge sharing behaviour and practice**

Knowledge is not shared across the Rosemary. The findings reveal that knowledge is shared regularly between the owner and specific employees. Some employees are able to share their knowledge and ideas directly with the owner face-to-face and via the Line application but that knowledge is not transferred throughout the organization. Knowledge sharing is found within particular groups of people and the owner is often involved in these practices. For example, hotel renovation plans are shared among the owner and HK manager. *'The owner and our team share our ideas about room renovation'* said a senior housekeeping employee. *'They should inform us about hotel renovation plans across the hotel so I am able to plan my work as well'* (RO1).

In terms of knowledge sharing between departments, organizational knowledge, such as customer related knowledge, is shared regularly as part of routine daily operations, but overall, knowledge sharing practices are poor and not always effective. The findings reveal that unclear messages and information are shared between departments, as one waiter said *'[...] FO called me that a researcher has*

*come, I have to serve her a welcome drink but they did not tell me who the researcher is [...]'. Additionally, knowledge and information are not updated.*

*'Why (FO) do you not inform us (HK) when you upgrade a room type for customers [...] this affects our work procedures [...]' (Room attendant).*

The analysis of knowledge sharing behaviour and practice within a department shows that all kinds of knowledge (organizational and individual) is shared effectively during operational routines through both face-to-face and written communication channels. Knowledge is shared within departments through coaching and mentoring of team members, monthly meetings with the owner, product and service development, problem solving and recording problems to discuss at the monthly meeting and through the mobile application Line (RU1, RU2, RO1, RO2 and RO3).

*'We talk not only about our jobs (customer information) but we also share customer behaviour with our team. Everyone has to know the same' (Waiter).*

Employees feel free to share their knowledge for several reasons, including perceived HOD and owner support. *'My manager answers all my questions and this make me feel free to talk and share my ideas with her'* said a GSA. Other factors promoting knowledge sharing are the close relationships between team members (RO1, RO2 and RO3) and the enjoyment of sharing ideas, particularly developing new products and services which is a practice often seen in the restaurant. Interestingly, the study reveals the importance of HODs and senior staff acting as role models for knowledge sharing. In particular, HODs pass on their expertise by working with newcomers and these employees observe HODs providing a high standard of service and try to follow their lead. As observed by the researcher in the restaurant, the restaurant manager talked to customers and one of the waitresses watched the manager (ROB1). One of waiters mentioned that; *'I saw my manager was serving customers with a professional performance and I tried to do as he did [...]' (Waiter).*

The participants at operational and management levels are willing to share knowledge because they have discovered the benefits for themselves (reducing their responsibilities) and for their team (team performance), as the Room attendant mentioned, *'by teaching them, then they can help and work for me'*. Similarly, a GAS said, *'we have to figure out the best way to eliminate work errors in our department'*.

*'We share and teach newcomers and then they can help us. We will be not getting very tired from work [...] once all staff know working procedures, they will know how to help each other for example A is delivering 1-2-3, B is able to help delivering 4-5 automatically'* (FO manager).

### **Summary of the Rosemary Hotel**

The HRM practices at the Rosemary Hotel are created by the owner, who has a desire to shape employees to deliver friendly services in a family-like working environment. There are few HRM practices at organizational level, such as annual meetings and staff parties, which provide opportunities for knowledge sharing across the hotel. This could result in knowledge not being shared across and throughout the hotel, but the organizational-based rewards and compensation system leads to less competitiveness between employees and promotes a willingness to share knowledge (when asked). It is evident that several of the HRM practices implemented, such as referral and team-based selection, teamwork, job rotation, the sister-brother relationship and coaching help to develop close relationships within teams. This promotes a willingness to share knowledge within the teams. Employees perceive the benefits of sharing knowledge, both for themselves (reducing their responsibilities) and for their teams (enhancing team performance) (see Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3** HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour at the Rosemary Hotel

Levels of analysis	HRM	Knowledge sharing behaviour
Organization	<p><b>Intention 1 : Shaping employees to be Rosemary (friendly and sharing ) employees</b>  <u>Policies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hiring employees who have people skills, positive attitude to work, multiple skills, willing to help others</li> <li>- Communicating sharing and helping behaviour towards employees</li> <li>- Concentrating on probation</li> </ul> <p><b>Intention 2 : Building a family- working environment, under the hotel's limitations</b>  <u>Policies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team-based selection by each department</li> <li>- Organizational-based reward system</li> <li>- Multiple tasks and teamwork</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Across hotel</u></b>            Knowledge is shared regularly between the owner and particular groups of employees (not throughout the organization) via face-to-face communication and Line application</p> <p><b><u>Between departments</u></b>            Knowledge (customer information) is shared regularly, mainly via written materials. Face-to-face is the preferred communication method for updating information</p> <p><b><u>Reasons for sharing</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organizational performance</li> <li>- Part of job/responsibility</li> <li>- Supportive and open minded-owner</li> </ul>
Departments	<p>HODs hold full authority for HRM in their department s (except rewards and compensation) based on the nature of the department</p> <p><b>Intention 3: Delivering good service in a family-like working atmosphere</b>  <u>practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multiple task and rotation work design</li> <li>- Intensive probation</li> <li>- HODs work with teams</li> <li>- Referral and team-based selection</li> <li>- Sister-brother relationship in coaching and mentoring</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Within department</u></b>            Both organizational and individual knowledge is shared commonly during operational routines, via</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face-to-face communication, coaching and mentoring, walkie-talkies, meetings</li> <li>- Written channel, logbooks, memos and Line application</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Reasons for sharing</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team performance</li> <li>- HODs as a role models</li> <li>- Perceived close relationships</li> </ul>
Operations	<p><b>Perception of HRM held by organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fair bonuses</li> <li>- Less competitiveness</li> </ul> <p><b>Perception of HRM held by HODs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Close to team</li> <li>- HODs as role models</li> <li>- Family-like working environment</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Knowledge sharing among employees</u></b>            Employees are willing to share their knowledge within teams. Knowledge sharing between team happens when asked</p> <p><b><u>Reasons for sharing</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perceived family-like working environment (close to one another)</li> <li>- Perceived self and team benefit</li> <li>- Responsibility</li> </ul>

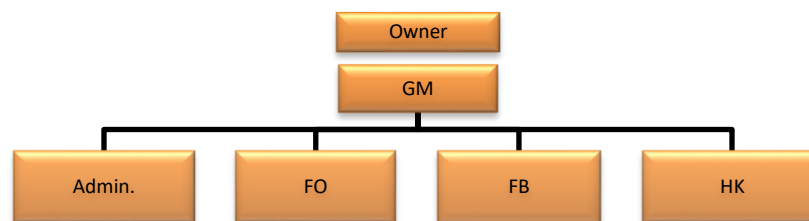
## Case study 4: Sunflower Hotel

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Sunflower Hotel is a Thai national hotel with 20 guest rooms, which opened nearly ten years old. It is operated by a Thai family and employs 26 people in 4 main departments, administration (back of house operations), Front office (FO), Food and beverage (FB) and Housekeeping (HK), as shown in Figure 4.4. This hotel has a General Manager who holds managerial authority over the entire operation and reports directly to the owner, a so-called 'centralized management system'.

*'All departments are under my responsibility as I am given authority from the owner [...]. I get involved with making decisions in all departments'* (General Manager).

**Figure 4.4** Sunflower Hotel organization chart



**Source:** information collected from the Sunflower Hotel by the researcher (2017)

### HRM at different levels of analysis

There is no HRM manager at this hotel; the GM works as the main HR practitioner. Most of the HRM practices, such as selection, work design (teamwork), performance appraisal and the rewards system are implemented by the GM for the entire organization. There are some HRM practices, particularly training and meetings, which are implemented differently at unit level as a result of the differences within each department. These HRM practices provide numerous opportunities to share and promote willingness in knowledge sharing practices and behaviour.

### At the organizational level

The evidence suggests that the intention of HRM focuses on building 'happiness at work' rather than enhancing organizational performance.

*'I appreciate with regards to organizational performance; it is not very good but acceptable [...] that we do not have an HRM manager. It is me who takes responsibility for HRM with help from administration in terms of HRM documentation [...] I believe that when employees are happy, they will deliver happiness to both their colleagues and customers' (General Manager).*

In order to make employees happy at work, the GM tries to build a family-like working atmosphere by reducing the status differential in the workplace, straightforward communication (open communication) and selecting friends and family members (Appendix 7).

*'I always say to employees that we are like a family, no supervisors, no GM. We are at the same level in a big family [...] we should open our minds and speak directly to each other in order to get rid of conflict' (General Manager).*

The Sunflower Hotel assesses employee performances using an open appraisal system. In doing so, the GM asks employees to assess their performance and gives them feedback. This 360 degree assessment is used when deciding on the employee of the month and the year (SF1, SU1).

The Sunflower Hotel is concerned with building a collaborative work climate by hiring candidates who have a positive attitude to helping and sharing and are willing to undertake multiple tasks. Nonetheless, the GM selects candidates who he feels happy to work with rather than considering their experience.

*'As part of our policy, the candidates will be asked if they are able to work multiple tasks and willing to help others' (General Manager).*

### **At the departmental level**

The analysis of HRM at departmental level reveals that HRM policies and practices are implemented by HODs with the involvement and support of the GM. The implementation of HRM is based on the hotel's characteristics due to the size of the

property. They use their human resources effectively by adopting functional flexibility in HRM. Non-participant observation by the researcher provided evidence of Job rotation, such as in the restaurant where employees worked and then later as bar tenders at the pool bar in the afternoon shift at the Sunflower Hotel (SOB4).

As mentioned, the Sunflower Hotel's HRM policy focuses on building happiness at work rather than improving employee productivity, and no official training programmes are used.

*'We do not want formal training [...] we help correct and remind each other during operational times'* (FO manager).

The sister-brother relationship in coaching and mentoring (among the GM, HODs and employees) is mainly used during daily operational routines as mentioned by a senior GSA that *'When I correct them, I never talk like a boss but I do like I am their brother'*.

Interactive training, such as workshops (twice monthly) and brainstorming between the owner, GM, HODs and employees is used in FB to develop new products, for example new menu designs or new drinks.

*'I work with them and show them how hard I work, how I deliver good services [...] just show them good practices'* (FB manager).

Only the FB department creates monthly training activities, using role play techniques. The FB manager claims that *'in order for our services to be consistent, we create monthly training to remind and refresh our service standards'*. These practices not only provide an opportunity to share ideas and knowledge, but also encourage employees to share their knowledge, as they find the experience enjoyable (SO2 and SO3).

*'It is fun and enjoyable; the owner asks me what my idea is [...]. We mix and try each other's cocktails [...] finally a new cocktail is on the menu'* (Waitress 2).

During the probation period, hands-on training by team members and HODs is used for newcomers, to share organizational knowledge, such as work procedures (SF1), organizational culture and climate (love and respect, helping and sharing) (SU2) and social skills (how to communicate with colleagues, how to be a team player) (SF1 and SU2).

Although this hotel does not provide employees with training and development activities, it supports employees who demonstrate a learning orientation.

*'If we arrange a cross-training project and staff are able to work in different departments, the owner would ask me to reduce the number of staff due to the budget [...] which I do not agree with. My personal point of view, specialization is still important in delivering a good service'*  
(General Manager).

There is no training across departments emerging at organizational level but unofficial cross-training is used at departmental level between the restaurant and kitchen (SO3).

*'I ask the manager if I were able to help in the kitchen when I am free, [...] I walk in the kitchen and ask chef to teach me [...] and they were willing to share their knowledge with me'* (Waitress 2).

### **At the operational level**

Analysing how employees experience and perceive the HRM used by the GM and HODs, the findings reveal that employees find referral-based selection makes them feel free and comfortable to work in the hotel as they have friends working in both their own and other departments (SO1 and SO2). *'I can easily deal with and ask for help from my friends who work in the restaurant'* (Senior GSA). This promotes a climate with a high level of work collaboration.

*'Everyone here is like my family [...] I share my impressions of delivering good service throughout the hotel'* (Waitress 1).



Since the Sunflower Hotel does not provide a training programme, the average salary is lower than its competitors (S01). This discourages employees from improving their performance (low levels of individual performance orientation).

*'I am working here routinely nothing challenges me [...] I just enjoy working here because I have good friends and good team here' (Senior GSA).*

Coaching and helping each other as part of teamwork is a practice that helps the employees work more easily and reduces work stress.

*'As we are a team, we help, remind, share, and push each other. This help us to work comfortably and no pressure because everyone supports others' (FO manager).*

It is evident that job rotation provides opportunities for employees to improve their knowledge and skills. One waitress said, *'as the restaurant is not busy in the afternoon, I am assigned to work at the pool bar too... I learn more about types of drinks and how to make drinks'.*

The department which develops new products or service procedures typically implements interactive training, for example, brainstorming and workshop training (found in FB). These practices introduce a relaxed learning climate and close relationships, and are enjoyable for employees (S02 and S03). This, in turn, builds organizational commitment from the employees with learning orientation.

*'One member of staff resigned because she got bored of this workshop [...] I got a job offer from Le-Meridien hotel but I do not want to work there because here provides me opportunities to learn, which I might not get from a big hotel [...] I am enjoying the workshop' (Waitress).*

On the other hand, employees in departments that perform routine tasks, have no challenges and nothing new to learn (SU1 and S01), and as a result are less likely to engage with the organization. One senior GSA said, *'I have been working here for 4 years, my tasks are routine nothing changes [...] I feel saturated [...] I am leaving next month'.*

Senior employees who train newcomers and share their knowledge perceive that it improves their abilities in being a trainer.

*'I used the same practices that the FO manager used to train me to train newcomer [...] I think my abilities of being a trainer improved from time to time and I feel more confident to teach them'* (Senior GSA).

### **Knowledge sharing practice and behaviour**

Analysing knowledge sharing practices and behaviour reveals that all kinds of knowledge is shared across and throughout the hotel, through collaborative working between departments. Interestingly, this practice came about automatically, not as a part of work design (SU2, SO2). All departments help each other in relevant tasks and skills within their daily operational routines as seen from the observation that the FO manager helps the room attendants make up rooms (SOB1). The evidence from interviews included examples where the GSA helps the waitresses taking orders in the breakfast service, as there are not many customers who check in or out at that time (SO1). In return, the waiters help the GSA preparing check-in and check-out documents (SO2).

Collaborations are based on individual talents and abilities. For example, the GM helps HK decorate the honeymoon room (SF1). The GSA, who has skills in art and graphic design, helps FB design new food and drink menus (SO3).

There are several events and activities that facilitate knowledge sharing, such as frequent informal meetings with the owner, monthly meetings of the management team and daily meetings within departments (in FB and HK). They employ the management-by-walking around technique, which provides opportunities for employees and GM to meet and share frequently; *'everyone can talk to me at all times either in my office or when I walk around'* said the GM. The mobile application Line provides a means for all levels of participant to share information and knowledge. There are 7 groups within Line (for each department, for the management team and for the entire hotel), which are used as the main channels of sharing information and knowledge. The GM acts as a role model for knowledge sharing, saying, *'I work with them as I want to show them my expertise [...] I share my experiences so they see*

*a sharing model*'. One employee said, *'he works professionally. I want to be like him'* (S02).

At the Sunflower Hotel, participants at all levels primarily share knowledge as part and process of their tasks. They find sharing knowledge, particularly organizational knowledge, to be common practice in the workplace when working as a team. *'Working here is not difficult because we work as a team'* (Senior GSA).

They are willing to share when asked (SU1 and S02) and perceived both self and team benefits (within teams).

*'I share my expertise with them because I want them to help me [...] if you do not talk or discuss, how can the team do the tasks'* (FO manager).

The findings reveal similar team characteristics, for example the same range of age and gender (S03), which promotes knowledge sharing behaviour. *'I feel free to share everything with my team because we are friends and the same age and gender'* said the waitress. Interactive training practices promote a family-like working environment and an enjoyment in sharing knowledge. This builds an organizational commitment from employees and encourages knowledge sharing behaviour (S02 and S03). However, knowledge sharing practice is more likely to be found in departments that frequently develop products or service procedures such as FB. In FO, where employees found no challenges and nothing new to learn (SU1 and S01), there is less likelihood of sharing knowledge, which impacts on work errors due to misunderstandings about service policies between work shifts (S01).

## **Summary for the Sunflower Hotel**

The findings suggest that at the Sunflower Hotel the General Manager is the centre of the management and works as the main HRM practitioner. Since this hotel is stable and wishes only to maintain its current position, it does not focus on hotel performance but on building 'happiness at work' and reducing social differentials within the organization: '*one team, one hotel*' (SF1). Several HRM practices, such as referral-based selection, selecting employees who have positive attitudes to helping and sharing, teamwork, job rotation, interactive training (workshops and brainstorming), a sister-brother relationship in coaching, an open appraisal system, meetings, mentoring and management by walking around (MBWA) combine to establish a family-like working environment and collaborative working climate which fosters knowledge sharing across the hotel at all levels of the organizational hierarchy. These HRM practices provide opportunities for staff at all levels of the organization to interact and share their knowledge.

Interestingly, some HRM practices, such as less focus on training programmes, lower levels of salary and lower welfare standards than competitors, discourage employees from improving their performance, but these practices do not seem to discourage employees from sharing their knowledge. They are willing to share their knowledge with their teams and their friends due to their close relationships and perceived family-like working environment (particularly during interactive training, meetings with the management team and sister-brother relationship coaching). Teamwork enables staff to fulfil their intrinsic motivations (perceived self and team benefits of sharing knowledge), as shown in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4** HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in the Sunflower Hotel

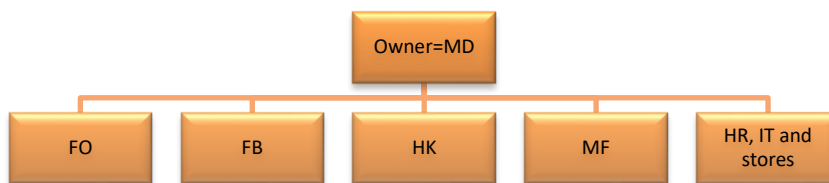
Levels of analysis	HRM	Knowledge sharing behaviour
Organization	<p><b><u>Intention 1 : Building the happiness at work</u></b>  <u>Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reducing social differentiation</li> <li>- Open communication</li> <li>- Referral-based selection</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Intention 2 : Building a collaborative working climate</u></b>  <u>Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hiring people with a good attitude to helping and sharing, team players</li> <li>- helping and sharing</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Across hotel and between departments</u></b>            Knowledge is regularly shared across the hotel by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working in collaboration</li> <li>- Informal meetings with the GM/owner</li> <li>- MBWA</li> <li>- Line application</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Reasons for sharing</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part of the job</li> <li>- Enjoyment</li> <li>- Friends</li> </ul>
Departments	<p>The GM and owner are involved in most HRM practices in the departments</p> <p><b><u>HRM practices</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Multiple tasks and job rotation</li> <li>- Sister-brother relationships</li> <li>- Interactive training</li> <li>- Unofficial cross-training</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Within department</u></b>            Knowledge is regularly shared by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Operational routines</li> <li>- Interactive training</li> <li>- Sister-brother coaching</li> <li>- Line/ memos /logbooks</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Reasons for sharing (HOD and team members)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team performance</li> <li>- Enjoyment</li> </ul>
Operations	<p><b><u>Perception of HRM held by organization</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'One team, one hotel' / a family-like working environment</li> <li>- No challenge / no improvement</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Perception of HRM held by HODs</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enjoyment</li> <li>- Relaxing and no stress</li> <li>- Commitment (only employees who have learning orientation)</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Reasons for sharing (among employees)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Similar team characteristics (age and gender)</li> <li>- Close to each other</li> <li>- Friends</li> </ul>

## Case study 5: Yellow Hotel

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The Yellow Hotel has 42 guest rooms and 52 employees working in 5 departments, Front office (FO), Food and beverage (FB), Housekeeping (HK), Marketing and finance (MF) and Human resources, IT and stores. The Yellow Hotel is a family business, owned and operated by a Thai national. For the last few years, most of the management has transferred to the second generation of the family, who have a background in marketing.

**Figure 4.5** Yellow Hotel organization chart



**Source:** information collected from the Yellow hotel by the researcher (2017)

This hotel positions itself as a small and local Lan-Na boutique hotel which delivers friendly local services (YF1).

*‘Since our hotel’s name means ‘the village’, we tend to deliver local and friendly service to our customers. The customer will perceive the contrast in peacefulness in the hotel compared to this busy city Chiang Mai’ (Managing Director).*

The hotel applies a decentralized management system and delegates management authority, including HRM responsibilities, to the head of each department.

*‘I am unable to control and manage all department s [...] I give HODs power and authority to manage their department but this should be based on the organization vision as we still have to walk in the same direction’ (Managing Director)*

## **HRM at different levels of analysis**

The analysis of HRM practices at different levels of the organization reveals that HRM practices emerge at organizational level, and mostly discourage knowledge sharing in the Yellow Hotel. However, there are some HRM practices at departmental level aimed at fostering knowledge sharing within departments.

### **At the organizational level**

The HRM policies and practices at organizational level are influenced by the internal and external business environment. The external business environment, such as the increasing minimum wage and highly competitive hotel labour market (YF1), results in a high employee turnover rate (30%) in the Yellow Hotel (YF1). This issue has an effect on both the financial performance and quality of service of the hotel (YF1), and there are employee turnover reduction policies in place. For example, recruitment policies aim to hire employees with at least one year of experience and a high sense of responsibility (YF1 and YF2). The Managing Director claims that these criteria demonstrate patience and a hardworking nature. The Yellow Hotel applies a tenure-based reward system (YF1 and YF2) increasing salary based on the employee tenure rather than performance (YO1). Several HRM policies and practices are relate to cost reduction. The Yellow Hotel hires migrant employees (from Burma) to work in unskilled positions, for example gardeners, as their wages are less than Thais' wages.

*'Somehow we have to hire Burmese workers because we pay them lower than Thai workers' (HRM manager).*

The Yellow Hotel is less concerned with employee training and development for reasons of cost reduction. There are few regular specific training activities created by the HRM manager or the owner (YF1 and YF2) except for the training activities which are compulsory by law, such as classroom training on first aid by the city hospital, and food hygiene and fire escape training by the city council. There is an employee self-learning strategy, meaning the staff learn and improve by themselves.

*'Sometimes employees have to work and learn how to do and finish their tasks by themselves as other staff are busy and have no time to coach and train'* (Managing Director).

The Yellow Hotel tries to combine tasks for employees, for example there is one employee who takes responsible for HRM, IT and storage (YF2). A job variety strategy (adding extra but relevant tasks) is used, for example, as seen in observations of the guest service administrator taking responsibility for customer check-in/out, reservations and acting as cashier (YOB2 ), and waitresses working as restaurant hosts, taking orders, and cashiers, bus boys and bartenders (when the restaurant is busy) (YOB3).

The Yellow Hotel's core service value, 'friendly and local service', influences its HRM policies. The Yellow Hotel requires local people who have Lan-Na characteristics and knowledge about Chiang Mai city and Lan-Na (or Northern Thai culture) as complementary qualifications (YF1). The HRM manager uses three channels for advertising job vacancies, the internet for younger employees, the local newspaper for local and older employees, and a job advertising board for other local employees.

Surprisingly, there are a few social activities found in the Yellow Hotel, such as a staff party twice a year and annual training activities (once a year outside the hotel). These practices are seen to be part of the reward system and are seen as team building activities across the hotel (YF2). There is an annual meeting (once or twice a year) that provides opportunities for all employees and the management team (owner and HODs) to meet and share knowledge (YO2). The MD uses this event to share hotel performance information, such as customer complaints regarding service, guestrooms, and property quality (YO1), as well as to listen to employees' opinions about addressing these problems.



### **At the departmental level**

The Yellow Hotel applies a decentralized management system and delegates HRM responsibilities to the head of each department. Most HRM practices enhance team productivity and performance, although HODs implement HRM policies differently depending on their own considerations.

The findings reveal that in the HK department, where customer safety is concerned, the core qualification for a room attendant is honesty (YU2). A 'one room maid, one room' system is designed for room attendants. In terms of training and development, the HK manager works as the main trainer. She uses a step-by-step demonstration as the main training technique. On a few occasions the HOD assigns senior staff who she trusts to train newcomers.

On the other hand, in FO and FB, a sister-brother relationship coaching and mentoring method is used during the operational routine. Performance is evaluated by team members. Peer evaluation (in FO) establishes a sense of teamwork and a family-like working environment as FO manager mentioned *'I ask all team members to evaluate a newcomer and whether she fits with our team [...] the newcomer told me that she feels part of our team as everyone gives her kind feedback'*

The FO manager considers knowledge sharing to be important to improve team performance. She believes that holding the same set and level of knowledge enables the team to eliminate miscommunication and work errors. Therefore, she creates job duplication techniques by assigning team members to re-fill and re-check the customer information of others.

*'Once a reservation employee knows about customer information, as we are a team, I do not want only her to know that information, So I assign the GSA to re-print and re-fill the reservation list [...]' (FO manager).*

This practice provides an opportunity for team members to share and gain the same set of customer information.

## **At the operational level**

HRM responsibilities are delegated to HODs. Although they had the power and authority to manage their teams, at times they did not feel supported by the organization, as one senior employee said, *'it is good to have power but sometimes I need support from the MD'*.

As a result of the high turnover rate, employees feel tired and bored of always training newcomers, but still do it as part of their work (YO2). In an attempt to reduce the employee turnover rate, the Yellow Hotel applies a tenure-based reward system. This practice involves engaging senior employees, who have less motivation to develop their performance. It also generates age diversity in the Yellow Hotel, which, in turn, generates barriers to working collaboratively in the hotel.

*'To me, the most difficult task is to work collaboratively with the housekeeping manager, who is almost 60 years old with her high level of ego as she has been working here since the hotel opened'* (FO manager) (30 years old).

As a consequence of cost reduction policies, there are several HRM practices, such as employees engaging in multiple tasks and less training and development activities, which seem to promote negative perceptions. Employees feel they are being exploited, and are confused and tense due to their multiple roles which results in work errors. A senior GSA said, *'I was confused, tense and forgot to check minibar bills'*. They found themselves saturated with the skills and knowledge needed to work in the hotel. A senior waiter said, *'I have been working here for years [...] there is nothing to know and improve any more, just do my job and go home'*. This means employees find no challenge at work and are unmotivated. *'It is boring here; nothing seems to be a challenge'* (Senior GSA).

Employees did not seem to engage with the compulsory training held by the HRM manager (YO1, YO2, YO3), as one employee said, *'it is hotel training and my manager asked me to attend the course [...] I have to join that training'*. In the annual meeting,

employees sense their voice is unvalued and unheard, as one senior employee said, *'I suggest many ideas to improve service procedures but I do not see anything improved'*.

On the positive side, employees perceive benefits for their career paths of working in multiple tasks as captured from interview *'I gain knowledge from working in different functions within a department. It benefits me to get a new job or higher position'* (Senior GSA).

Some employees find that when team members are able to work at multiple tasks it means they are all able to work in substitute roles, which is a benefit when they want to take holidays or days off (YO2 and YO3).

*'I am willing to share my knowledge as it helps my colleague being able to work in my place [...] and I can take day off without worrying about work'* (Waitress).

The HRM practices used within the department, such as sister-brother relationships in coaching and mentoring, and performance evaluated by team members or peer evaluation (in FO), introduce a family-like working environment into teams. To illustrate this, the FO manager stated, *'I ask all team members to evaluate a newcomer and whether she will fit with our team [...] the newcomer told me that she feels a part of our team as everyone give her kind feedback'* (FO manager). Likewise, the senior GSA shows that she perceives a sister-brother relationship in the performance appraisal, saying *'I like my manager asking us to evaluate her performance. This makes me close to her like my sister and I feel harmony like home'* (Senior GSA).

## **Knowledge sharing behaviour and practice**

Analysis of the knowledge sharing behaviours and practices reveals that knowledge is not regularly shared across the hotel either horizontally (between departments) or vertically (organizational hierarchy). There is only one annual meeting and off-the-job training activities (1-2 times per year) that provide opportunities for employees and the management team to share their knowledge. This introduces a low climate of collaboration within the organization. Knowledge sharing between departments happens during the daily operational routine tasks. Only customer information, such as customer requests, is shared once a day between the FO department and the relevant department, HK or FB, in the form of written documentation. This leads to some conflict in the Yellow Hotel. The FO department have conflict with the HK department because they do not understand each other's work procedures and have different concerns. For example, the FO tries to impress customers by upgrading the room type without asking HK, which impacts on work procedures and increases costs in HK (YO3).

Evidence from observations shows that all kinds of organizational and individual knowledge is shared regularly within the departments during operational routines, at shift handovers (in FO and FB) and at the end of day meetings in HK (YOB1, 2). Two forms of sharing take place, face-to-face communication (hands-on training, coaching and mentoring, working multiple tasks) and written communication (logbooks, memos and reports). The mobile application Line is used to share knowledge and information among the management team (owner, MD and HODs) and among team members.

Looking at the reasons for sharing knowledge, participants at all levels share knowledge as part and process of their tasks (responsibility). As captured from senior waiter *'It is common to talk and share because we are working we have to talk, to share'*.

The findings reveal that a knowledge sharing climate motivates team members to share their knowledge; *'everyone shares and so I share'* said a newcomer. Inter-

personal factors motivate knowledge sharing behaviour and there are perceived benefits of sharing knowledge such as no worries when taking holidays (YO2 and YO3), furthering their careers (YO1) and the perceived self-esteem from sharing knowledge (being acceptable and respected) (YU1 and YU2). Most participants are more likely to consider team performance than individual performance. This leads them to be willing to share their knowledge and help each other in order to enhance their team performance as a senior waiter said *'If I do not share and talk, it would affect my team'*. Furthermore, the practices of coaching and mentoring among team members also enhances their ability to share knowledge *'I have learnt how to coach a newcomer without interrupting my routine tasks'* (Senior waiter).

### **Summary for the Yellow Hotel**

In summary, the evidence demonstrates that employees are more likely to engage with HRM practices implemented at departmental level than organizational level, and knowledge sharing is also more likely to be found at departmental level (between team members) than organizational level. It is evident of hard HRM approach at organizational level aiming to reduce costs. There is limited consideration of building a collaborative climate within the organization. There are opportunities for social activities and GM meetings for the whole organization only once or twice a year. This means there is little opportunity for all levels of employee and departments to share their knowledge, particularly individual knowledge. A decentralized management system is used in the Yellow Hotel. Each department focuses on their performance rather than the entire organization's performance. As a result, there is conflict between the departments, which have different considerations and do not understand each other's work procedures. The employee's diversity in terms of age and nationality, can make it difficult to share and talk.

*'It is a big challenge to me in terms of training migrant employees (Burmese) who cannot properly communicate in the Thai language and have no sense of working in the service industry'* (HK manager).

Due to there being no specific training, employees perceive no development opportunities within the Yellow Hotel. As a consequence, they are not committed to, or engaged with, the organization. They share knowledge for daily operations not to enhance service quality.

There are HRM practices implemented at departmental level (within departments) which foster knowledge sharing among team members. HRM practices, specifically work design (multiple tasks and job duplication), coaching and training and performance appraisal by team members or peer assessment, functionally provide opportunities for employees to interact and share their knowledge during daily operational processes. The findings reveal a sister-brother relationship in coaching and training, and performance appraisal by team members, which establish a sense of team and a family-like working environment. These factors introduce a willingness for knowledge sharing among team members. The employees use the knowledge sharing opportunities provided by HRM practice to fulfil their intrinsic motivations, perceived self-benefits such as future careers, holidays, being acceptable and gaining respect (as shown in Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5** HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in the Yellow Hotel

Levels of analysis	HRM	Knowledge sharing behaviour
Organization	<p><b><u>Intention 1 : Reduce employee turnover rate</u></b>  <u>Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hiring less experienced employees</li> <li>- Tenure-based rewards and compensation system</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Intention 2: Cost reduction</u></b>  <u>Policies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Combining jobs (multiple tasks)</li> <li>- Hiring self-learners, and migrant workers</li> <li>- Providing fewer training activities</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Intention 3: deliver local service</u></b>  <u>Policy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hire local employees</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Across hotel :</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No regular sharing</li> <li>- Low work collaboration</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Between departments</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Written channel of sharing during operational routine</li> <li>- Customer information</li> <li>- Conflicts</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Reasons for sharing</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part of job</li> </ul>
Departments	<p>HODs hold full authority for, and implement, HRM in their department</p> <p><b><u>Intention 1: Enhance team performance practices</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coaching and mentoring</li> <li>- Job redundancy</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Intention 2: Building a sense of team</u></b>  <u>Practices</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Team-based performance appraisal</li> <li>- Sister-brother relationships</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Within department</u></b>  Regularly shared</p> <p><b><u>Reasons for sharing (HOD and team members)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part of job</li> <li>- Team sharing climate</li> <li>- Being respected</li> <li>- Team performance</li> </ul>
Operations	<p><b><u>Perception of HRM held by organization</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not supportive MD</li> <li>- Employees diversity</li> <li>- Being taken advantage of</li> <li>- No challenge or development</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Perception of HRM held by HOD</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Close teamwork</li> <li>- Fair feedback</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Reasons for sharing (among employees)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perceived self- benefit (holidays, career path, being respected)</li> <li>- Teamwork</li> </ul>

## **Summary of Part 1**

Part 1 has presented the findings from the empirical research undertaken through multilevel study involving analysis at various levels of the organizational hierarchy. By employing a thematic analysis technique to analyse the raw data collected from 5 boutique hotels in Chiang Mai city, Thailand, the Aster, Daisy, Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow Hotels, the section has presented the characteristics of each case study and introduced the themes of HRM at various levels of the organization, the organizational, departmental and operational levels, and patterns of knowledge sharing behaviour within each case study. The study reveals two characteristics of HRM used in Thai boutique hotels: 1) HRM for the entire organization or at organizational level; and 2) HRM for individual departments at departmental level.

The analysis has identified HRM at various levels of the organizations including: 1) HRM at organizational level, created and implemented by the owner, general manager or HRM manager for entire organizations; 2) HRM at departmental level, which may have been created at organizational level and implemented by line managers or created and implemented by line managers, senior employees, or employees; and 3) HRM at operational level. Employees perceive and experience HRM at both organizational and departmental levels.

The HRM for the entire organization, at organizational level, is the policy and practice constructed by HRM leaders including the management company, the owner or the GM. This HRM can be implemented by HRM managers, the GM or the hotel owners for employees across the entire organization.

The analysis reveals another character of HRM, which is implemented and used in each department at unit level. HRM practice can be created either by HRM leaders at organizational level or HRM practitioners at unit-level who also implement HRM within departments. Although some case studies have management (Aster) or the GM (Sunflower) involved with HRM at unit level, all the case studies have HODs as the main HRM practitioners at departmental level.



This chapter has presented the extent of the knowledge sharing practice and behaviour found in each case study. The chapter categorizes knowledge into 2 types, organizational and individual, and clarifies the dimensions or patterns of knowledge sharing practice vertically (across an organization at all levels of the organizational hierarchy) and horizontally (between departments), along with knowledge sharing within departments.

The study explores the intended and implemented HRM at various levels of analysis, its effect on knowledge sharing, and the effect of knowledge sharing (and not sharing) on quality of service for each case study. To explore the role of HRM in knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai city, Thailand, the next section presents the cross-case analysis of the findings from the five case studies.

## PART 2: A CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The previous part of this chapter has analysed the findings from five individual case studies. In order to improve the understanding of HRM and its role in fostering knowledge sharing in Thai boutique hotels, this part analyses the findings across the five case studies. It begins with an analysis of the HRM and knowledge sharing phenomena in Thai boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand and in doing so, the relationship between HRM and knowledge sharing is explored. Part 2 ends with a summary of the roles of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour which is the basis of the discussion in the following chapter.

### 4.1 HRM in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Undertaking a cross-case analysis identifies the similarities and differences in the considerations of boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand and how they influence the construction and implementation of their HRM policies and practices, as shown in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6** Comparison of HRM at organizational level

Themes	Aster	Daisy	Rosemary	Yellow	Sunflower
Operation	Management company		Family-owned management (Thai owner)		
HRM leaders	Management company		The owner		GM and the owner
HRM practitioners	HRM manager and HODs		The owner and HRM manager, who also has other roles, and HODs		GM and HODs
HRM policies and practices					
Similar HRM policies and practices	To eliminate the cost of management as they are a small hotel with limited HRM budget - Functional flexibility of HRM: multiple roles, job rotation, competency-based selection To build a good team and close relationship - Family relationship involved in HRM, referral-based selection, a sister-brother relationship, communication				
Different HRM policies and practices	To deliver excellent services - Monthly or weekly training, meetings		To deliver family and friendly services - Annual meetings - Compulsory training by law		
	To build strong teamwork - Team building - Regular social activities	To build a family atmosphere - Regular social activities	To form employees to be as Rosemary's character - Transferring organizational culture	To reduce costs - Migrant employees - Tenure-based reward	To build 'one hotel-one team' - A willingness to help - GM as a centre

#### **4.1.1 The similarities of HRM in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand**

The evidence shows that all the case studies are concerned with the cost of management, as the GM of the Sunflower said, *'if we arrange a cross-training project and staff are able to work in different departments, the owner would ask me to reduce the number of staff due to the budget'*. Each hotel tries to establish a small and simple organizational structure as demonstrated in the organization charts presented of each hotel in Part 1.

At departmental level, there is a flat structure of management with one HOD, one or two supervisors and the rest of the staff as team members. Most of the case studies (except Aster and Daisy) only have the departments which are necessary for hotel operations, such as FO, FB and HK (see Part 1: Organizational structure of case studies). This shared consideration leads all the case studies to use functional flexibility as part of their HRM practices.

#### **Functional flexibility of HRM**

##### **A. Selecting flexible employees**

To reduce the cost of HRM, all the case studies applied functional flexibility. They require employees who are willing to work flexibly, as shown by the statement of the HRM manager of the Aster (which is operated by a management company):

*'One of my considerations is employee attitude towards working on multiple tasks. The candidates will be told as our hotel is a small hotel, they will have to be responsible for many duties, how do they feel about that'.*

This practice is also found in the family-owned hotels.

*'As part of our policy, the candidates will be asked if they are able to work multiple tasks and are willing to help others'* (General Manager of the Sunflower).

## B. Designating flexible roles

It appears that all of the case study hotels designate multiple roles for employees. For example, most have an HRM manager who also has several other responsibilities such as IT, administrator or stock controller (Rosemary and Yellow), or the GM is also responsible for HRM tasks (Sunflower). This multiple-roles policy is implemented at departmental level. Due to the teams being small (4-8 members), most of the HODs (in FB and FO) designate their employees to work in multiple roles within the department, undertaking a range of functions with various responsibilities. The HRM manager of the Daisy said, *'since we have few staff, they will be rotated to work in all functions within their departments'*. Thus, employees can experience working in all functions within their department.

*'I arrange the work roster so that everyone has a chance to meet and work together [...] morning shift is rotated to work in the evening shift for example'* (RU1).

HODs in all departments work with their employees, particularly at busy periods such as breakfast time (FB) and check-in/out (FO and HK). One of the HODs said, *'we are a small team so we work together, we correct each other's work errors like a sister-brother'* (YU1).

## C. Encouraging attitudes toward flexible roles

The management promote the need for the flexible-role approach to their employees.

*'We always remind our team that everyone has to be prepared to be a work substitute for others as we are a team'* (Restaurant manager of the Aster).

The evidence from operational employees supports the idea that they are encouraged to work flexibly, as a senior room attendant at the Rosemary said, *'I was taught to help others since my first day here when my tasks are finished I have to help others. It happened automatically'*. Similarly, a waitress at the Daisy mentioned that *'my supervisor always told me that we work together and we have to help each other. So, one day I might be assigned to work in the bar or so on'*.

D. Flexible implementation of HRM at departmental level

It appears that, although, some of the case study hotels have a management team (Aster) and a GM (Sunflower) involved with HRM at departmental level, all have HODs as the main HRM practitioners at departmental level (see Table 4.7). This is because HODs and employees have close relationships. As a result, HODs are able to support their staff more appropriately than the management.

*‘HODs know their staff better than me so we, (GM and I), only guide HODs with a broad framework. They hold full authority in implementing all HRM into practices within their departments, so we believe that they can use the HRM more productively than we can’ (HRM manager of the Daisy).*

Therefore, the evidence shows that the HODs in all the case studies flexibly adopt HRM practices depending on the nature and characteristics of each department, as shown in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7** Implementation of HRM in each department

Theme	Depts.	Aster	Daisy	Rosemary	Yellow	Sunflower
<b>Selection</b>	FO	Same practice (HR+ HOD+2 peers+ GM)	Depending on HODs	Depending on HODs and team members	HOD + team members	Same (GM +HOD)
	FB				GM	
	HK				GM+HOD	
<b>Work design</b>	FO	Shift rotation, multiple tasks and job duplication only in Yellow				
	FB	Functional rotation and multiple tasks				
	HK	Fixed roles and helping each other after their own jobs are done				
<b>Training and development</b>	FO	15-minute training and team briefings				
		A family relationship correcting and reminding each other during operational times				
	FB	15-minute training and team briefings				
		A family relationship correcting and reminding each other during operational times				
		Interactive training for product and service development				
	HK	15-minute training and team briefings				
A family relationship when inspecting guest rooms by HOD						
<b>Performance appraisal</b>	FO	Same practice aligned with organizational level (peer)	Same practice aligned with organizational level (peer)	Same practice aligned with organizational level (peer)	Team based	Same practice aligned with organizational level (peer)
	FB				GM	
	HK				GM+HOD	

As mentioned in Section A, although all the case study hotels require employees to work flexibly and be willing to work in multiple roles, at departmental level the HODs select employees with the specific qualifications necessary for each department. For example, good communication skills and an approachable personality are required for FO.

*'We are looking for a team member who has communication abilities, is friendly, and gets along with us'* (FO manager of the Rosemary).

Honesty is essential in the HK department as they are concerned with customer safety. The HK manager of the Yellow said, *'our department is concerned with customer safety, when I select employees I have to make sure that they are honest and will not steal customer's belongings'*.

As indicated in Section B, job rotation and multiple roles are implemented in the FO and FB departments. This practice cannot be implemented within departments which need employees with specific skills, such as the Kitchen and HK. The Head Chef at the Daisy said:

*'Each position has its own working standards and systems [...] the Commis chefs are not allowed to cover for Chef de parties. They may only handle the basic functions'*.

The HODs of the FB department, which often develops new products or service procedures and needs consistency of service, arranges training activities more frequently than other departments which only perform routine tasks. The FB manager of Sunflower said, *'in order for our services to be consistent, we create a monthly training activity to remind and refresh our staff of service standards'*. On the other hand, the FO manager claimed, *'we do not want formal training [...] we help correct and remind each other during operational times like a sister-brother'* (SU1). It appears that a sister-brother relationship, involving correcting each other, could not work properly in the HK department because employees work separately and help each other only after their own jobs are done. A room attendant at the Aster said, *'we work on our own floor [...] we have time after we have finished setting up the*

*guest rooms to talk about our job and customer behaviour and so on before going home'.*

The evidence shows a variety of training techniques being used in the Daisy, such as 'train the trainer' in FB, Q&A and testing knowledge in HK, and case studies in FO. This could be due to the fact that the Daisy employs HODs who have experience from chain hotels. However, it appears that all the case studies use similar training techniques within the same departments. For example, FB and HK, which require skilled-employees, are more likely to use role play and workshop techniques to practice and improve employee skills. On the other hand, in FO, which encounters customer complaints, HODs use brainstorming and case study techniques to find the best solutions to problems. HRM policies and practices are flexibly implemented, depending on the nature of each department rather than the HOD's background (either local or from international chain hotels) or the ownership of the hotel.

### **Family-oriented relationships in HRM**

The evidence shows that all the case study hotels consider work collaboration necessary for hotel operations. The HRM manager of the Daisy said, *'as we are a small property we try to make our staff feel at home, where all are free to talk and discuss [...] it is important when working collaboratively'*. They try to build close relationships in the organization by applying a family approach to HRM. They use informal job orientation and take a newcomer around the hotel and introduce them to existing employees. One GSA said, *'I was very pleased on my first day here. They all welcomed me and since then we so close with each other'* (RO1).

It is evident that reducing differences in status in Thai boutique hotels can eliminate gaps between employees and management teams. For example the HOD's cooking day in the Daisy. Employees enjoy close relationships with their managers, as a waitress said, *'I feel like he (the GM) is my brother [...] he cooks for us and sometimes ask me to help. I do not hesitate to talk to him even if he is the GM'*.

In the Sunflower, the GM communicates a sense of family to his employees as the following example.

*'I always say to employees that we are like a family, no supervisors, no GM. We are at the same level in a big family [...] we should open our minds and speak directly to each other like sister-brother in order to get rid of conflict'*  
(the GM at the Sunflower)

To build a family atmosphere, all the management teams (except the Yellow) include approachable people who are open to listening to feedback and engaging with employees. The owner of the Rosemary takes employees out for lunch either on their day off or when they are on duty. A waiter at the Rosemary said, *'the owner takes me out for lunch, we are close like family members'*.

At the departmental level, HODs show their commitment to building good teams by employing a referral-based selection process (Daisy, Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow) and through the sister-brother relationship (all the case studies). The analysis at organizational level reveals that management focus on selecting employees who are able to work in multiple roles and willing to help others. Analysis at departmental and operational level shows that most employees are friends and relatives, as the waiter at Sunflower said, *'most of us knew each other before we came to work here'* (SO2). Newcomers are advised to apply for vacant positions by their friends and relatives who already working in the hotel. *'My brother and sister who worked here, advised me about my application. I then applied here'* said a waiter at the Daisy. HODs are likely to select employees from their former colleagues, as the HK manager at the Daisy said, *'I selected this person who has been working with me for 4 months at XXX Hotel before I moved here. It is easy for me to train her'*.

In trying to build good relationships within departments, a sister-brother relationship is implemented by HODs when communicating with their team members. The HK manager of the Aster said, *'I am open with them first, make friends with them, build their trust in me like a sister and eventually they feel free to share everything with me which is good for working together as a team'*. The evidence shows a sister-brother relationship is used during the daily operational routine



when correcting and mentoring others. *'When I correct them, I never talk like a boss but I do like I am their brother'* said the Restaurant manager of the Aster.

There is evidence of a sister-brother approach to performance appraisal which establishes a sense of teamwork and a family-like working environment. The senior GSA at the Yellow said, *'I like my manager asking us to evaluate her performance. This makes me close to her like my sister'*. The FO manager employs the same practice with a newcomer, as she said, *'I ask all team members to evaluate a newcomer and whether she fits with our family (team) [...] the newcomer told me that she feels part of our team as everyone gives her kind feedback'*.

The majority of informants perceived a family-like working environment and felt free to talk and share. For example, a public area attendant at the Aster said, *'we all are friendly, open-minded, and sharing. I feel like a family here'*.

#### **4.1.2 Differences in HRM in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand**

The previous section indicates that there are similarities of HRM across all the case studies, which are influenced by their shared considerations, namely the cost of management and teamwork, and therefore all the case studies use functional flexibility as part of their HRM practices and adopt a family relationship approach to HRM. The analysis reveals that considerations about achieving competitive advantage regarding service performance differentiate the ways HRM is implemented in each case study. As shown in Table 4.6, the analysis identifies two groups of service performance considerations, 1) delivering excellent service (Aster and Daisy), and 2) delivering a family friendly service (Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow).

##### Service quality improvement

The analysis reveals that the Aster and the Daisy aim to achieve competitive advantage by focusing on delivering excellent services, and they consider employee development to be important.

*'As we are a boutique hotel, the customers expect to get excellent service from us. At this point, we are concerned with training and development in order to*

*enhance our employees' ability to deliver a high quality of service'* (HRM manager of the Daisy).

Therefore, they provide frequent training programmes for all employees across the entire organization (AD2). They are concerned with sharing information and knowledge, which they achieve by arranging monthly GM meetings and morning briefings.

The training policy formed at organizational level (Aster and Daisy) is implemented at departmental level. The evidence shows that the HODs of the Aster and the Daisy frequently create HRM practices to enhance the team's performance and improve service quality, such as 15-minute training activities, either in the form of short briefings or practice sessions. As the HK manager of the Daisy said, *'we have a 12-month training plan which refers to the hotel's policy, with adjustable details in each month'*.

To improve the quality of service, the Aster and Daisy have the duty manager approach where the manager at a time walks around the organization to check with and support employees. This practice is also seen at the Sunflower where the GM is always on duty and uses the management by walking around (MBWA) technique. He claims this practice provides him with opportunities to talk to and meet with employees at all levels and help address operational problems, such as customer complaints, as well as helping employees, if necessary, in real time (on time).

*'I never sit in my office, I am always walking around to see if there are any problems or who needs help [...]. This is one reason why I often meet my staff and see the real-time situations'* (GM of Sunflower).

By contrast, the Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow, which try to deliver family friendly service, are less likely to focus on improving their employees' service abilities and skills. As a result, they only provide training programmes which are compulsory by law, for example first aid, which are hosted by external organizations such as the hospital or city council. They find the practice of offering a wider training programme to be costly and unnecessary. The FO manager of the Yellow said, *'as we work together and we correct one another's errors [...] apart from training*

*newcomers, we do not have training often or it could be said that we do not have training activities. It is not necessary for us'. As such they are less likely to focus on sharing information and knowledge across the entire organization. Neither the Rosemary, Sunflower nor Yellow have morning briefings, they only share information, particularly customer information and requests, during the shift handover. Rosemary and Sunflower arrange monthly department meetings involving the owner or GM, while Yellow only has an annual meeting where knowledge and information are shared across the entire organization.*

#### Cost reduction and HRM practice

There is evidence of a hard approach to HRM (Foot et al, 2015) found in the Yellow. It appears that Yellow tends to reduce HRM cost and is less likely to care about employee training and development and instead use a self-learning strategy.

*'Sometimes employees have to work and learn how to do and finish their tasks by themselves as other staff are busy and have no time to coach and train'*  
(Managing Director of the Yellow).

The findings reveal that the Yellow Hotel hires migrant employees (from Burma) to work in un-skilled positions, for example gardeners, as their wages are less than Thais' wages. *'Somehow we have to hire Burmese workers because we pay them less than Thai workers'* said the HK manager. They used a tenure-based reward system to retain employees. These practices generate a greater diversity in the employee demographic, in terms of nationality and age, which in turn created barriers to working collaboratively in this hotel (As noted in the Yellow Hotel)

In summary, it appears that the construction and implementation of HRM in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand are based on their priorities. A shared characteristic of all the case studies is that they are small or medium sized boutique hotels, which means they have small numbers of employees. This leads them to use functional flexibility as part of their HRM practices. All the case study hotels try to build close relationships by applying a family-oriented relationship approach in their HRM. The analysis explores the difference in management's vision and strategies to achieving competitive advantage in each case study, such as service

quality improvement and cost reduction. This differentiates the use of HRM in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The following section analyses how the construction and implementation of HRM described in this section fosters knowledge sharing in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

## 4.2 Knowledge sharing in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand

The previous section has explored HRM in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand, through analysis at the organizational and the departmental levels. This section identifies the knowledge sharing phenomenon in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand and concentrates on analysis at operational level. The evidence shows three main characteristics of knowledge sharing, vertical, horizontal and intra-departmental knowledge sharing.

### 4.2.1 Vertical knowledge sharing behaviour

The evidence reveals that knowledge is shared across multiple levels within the organizational hierarchies, both top-down (from senior managers to employees) and bottom-up (from employees to the management). Vertical knowledge sharing is found either synchronously or asynchronously, as shown in Table 4.8. Synchronous knowledge sharing is the actions that both sender and receiver take to exchange their knowledge at the same time. On the other hand, asynchronous knowledge sharing refers knowledge sharing or exchange is not existing or happening at the same time.

**Table 4.8** Themes of vertical knowledge sharing practices

Theme	Aster	Daisy	Rosemary	Sunflower	Yellow
Synchronously	Annual meetings			Annual meetings	
	Monthly GM meetings and training		Monthly meetings within departments		
	MBWA by GM / HR/ management on duty			MBWA by GM	
Asynchronously	Mobile communication app Line and notice board				
	Audit score report, and Guest history system				

#### A. Synchronous knowledge sharing

Synchronous knowledge sharing is more likely to be found in the hotels which focus on improving the quality of services, notably the Aster and Daisy. They provide both formal and informal opportunities for vertical knowledge sharing, as shown in Table 4.8. Synchronous knowledge sharing across the entire organization takes place in both annual and monthly meetings. This practice provides formal opportunities for the management to share the hotel's performance and listen to employees' opinions about any problems throughout the entire organization. In relation to fostering effective working, the Aster, Daisy and Sunflower employ the MBWA technique to check on and support employees. This practice provides informal opportunities for the management and employees to share knowledge during the day.

*'Everyone can talk to me at all times either in my office or when I walk around'*  
(GM of Daisy).

By doing this, employees perceive that they are supported by the management and this, in turn, promotes a willingness to share knowledge.

*'The manager is around to help and answers all my questions and this makes me feel comfortable to work and share my ideas with her'* (GSA at the Daisy).

In contrast, synchronous knowledge sharing is found less in the hotels which are less focused on enhancing the quality of service, the Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow. They seldom provide opportunities for knowledge sharing across the entire organization. The evidence shows that in the Rosemary, vertical knowledge sharing occurs monthly in departmental meetings, where the owner, HOD and operational employees are able to discuss and share knowledge. This meeting provides regular opportunities for knowledge sharing vertically. Knowledge and information are not shared throughout the organization, as one employee said, *'we are able to share and discuss directly with the owner in the meeting but only within the department who know what is going on [...] not all the hotel hears these messages'* (R02). In the Sunflower, vertical knowledge sharing happens daily between the GM and some specific employees when the owner or GM is walking around (MBWA). There is less evidence of vertically synchronous knowledge sharing in the Yellow, which tends to

focus on reducing costs in operations, The Yellow provides only one opportunity, the annual meeting, for knowledge sharing across the entire organization. It is evident that some employees sense their voice is unvalued or unheard in the meetings. This perception leads the employees to be unwilling to share or engage with the organization, as one of the senior employees of the Yellow said, *'I suggest many ideas to improve service procedures but I do not see anything improved. I better keep quiet'*.

#### B. Asynchronous knowledge sharing

Focusing on asynchronous knowledge sharing, the evidence shows that all the case study hotels widely use the mobile communication app Line and notice boards to share explicit knowledge and information, particularly pictorial information. Using Line is considered synchronous knowledge sharing among the management team, as they are allowed to use mobile phones during working time. The management team claim that the Line application is one of the most effective communication channels as it is a fast and thorough method of sharing information, as well as having the ability to leave messages for recipients when they are busy. However, for operational staff who do not have access to their mobile phone all the time during working hours Line is asynchronous knowledge sharing mechanism, as they only use it in rest times. Some employees argue that Line is not an effective communication tool for sharing when they need help, *'we can chat via Line but better if we can communicate in person. Then we can discuss'* (YO1).

As mentioned, the Aster exhibits a strong commitment to achieving a higher hotel ranking among the hotels in Chiang Mai, and shares feedback and comments in the form of reports. It appears that the Aster also uses its IT system to record the customer history, which only the management are able to access.

Vertical knowledge sharing in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai is primarily in synchronous form with that the use of asynchronous forms being supplementary.

*'Though the formal communication is email, I prefer talk and discussion in person since it can foster two-way communication among us and make sure we understand each other'* (GM of the Daisy).

It appears that vertical knowledge sharing is more likely to be found in the hotels which focus on quality of service, the Aster and Daisy.

#### 4.2.2 Horizontal knowledge sharing

Horizontal knowledge sharing refers to knowledge sharing between departments. The analysis identifies horizontal knowledge sharing normally occurring as standard practice within hotel procedures, both asynchronously and synchronously. The findings reveal voluntary knowledge sharing in some case studies (Aster and Sunflower), as shown in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9 Comparison of horizontal knowledge sharing across case studies**

Theme	Aster	Daisy	Rosemary	Sunflower	Yellow	
<b>Standard procedure</b>						
Asynchronous	Mobile communication app Line (except among the management team)					
	Report and reservation sheet					
Synchronous	Updating information					
	Morning briefing					
	Cross-training (individually)					
<b>Voluntary</b>						
Synchronous	Walking past each other				Cross-training (individually)	
					Helping friend in other depts.	

#### A. Routine knowledge sharing as part of standard operations

All the case study hotels routinely share knowledge, particularly customer information, between related departments as part of their daily operational processes. They use written material such as reports and guest reservation sheets as the main knowledge sharing channel and only the management share knowledge and information via Line. With the exception of Yellow, all of the hotels synchronously share knowledge when updating information and to advise of changes, such as customer inquiries by phone or in person.

It appears that, in the hotels which focus on delivering excellent service (the Aster and Daisy) knowledge is shared routinely in the morning briefings, when guest knowledge, customer complaints, the business situation and general information is

shared between the GM and HODs. This knowledge and information is passed to the operational employees the same day either through team briefings or via Line.

In contrast, the evidence from the case study hotels which are less focused on excellent service, shows ineffectual knowledge sharing between departments, such as unclear messages. For example, the waiter at Rosemary said, *'FO called me that a researcher has come, I have to serve her a welcome drink but they did not tell me who the researcher is'*, and they do not advise of changes. It is evident that knowledge is not shared throughout the entire organization.

*'The owner and our team share our ideas about room renovation'* said a senior housekeeping employee. *'They should inform us about hotel renovation plans across the hotel so I am able to plan my work as well'* (GSA at the Rosemary).

#### Voluntary knowledge sharing

Voluntary knowledge sharing among employees across departments is found in the Aster and Sunflower. The findings from the Sunflower reveal that job-specific knowledge is shared in cross-training, but this practice is not an HRM policy. Instead, it seems linked to the climate created partially created by HRM practices.

*'I ask the manager if I was able to help in the kitchen when I am free, [...] I walk in the kitchen and ask the chef to teach me [...] and they were willing to share their knowledge with me'* (Waitress at the Sunflower).

Job-specific and customer behaviour knowledge are shared while helping friends in other departments do their jobs. These practices happen automatically (without being asked) and not as a part of the employees' job descriptions or responsibilities. All the departments help each other with relevant tasks within their daily operational routine (in the Aster and Sunflower). The Sunflower, the smallest hotel among the case studies, shows a strong commitment to building 'one-hotel, one-team' by putting the GM at its centre, involved with the majority of HRM activities. As part of this approach, along with the policy of hiring candidates who have a positive attitude to helping, sharing and undertaking multiple tasks, employees of



the Sunflower are allowed to help out and work in other departments. Along with the referral-based selection process, these practices promote a climate with a high level of work collaboration in this hotel. *'We are like a big family here. I can easily deal with and ask for help from my friends who work in the restaurant'* said the senior GSA, and the perception of a family atmosphere promotes a willingness to share knowledge horizontally.

*'Everyone here is like my family [...] I share my impressions of delivering good service throughout the hotel'* (Waitress at the Sunflower).

Similarly, employees of the Aster voluntarily share customer behaviour knowledge (from their observations) across departments during lunch breaks and when they pass each other.

*'A room maid informs me about a customer in room XXX who drinks lot water, like 4 bottles a day. She also suggests I should remember this point when this customer comes for breakfast'* (Waitress at the Aster).

Analysing the HRM at the Aster shows that it exhibits a strong commitment to achieving a higher hotel ranking among the hotels in Chiang Mai city. They communicate this goal and share feedback and comments from external and internal audits across the entire organization. This establishes a shared mission among the employees and they are likely to be concerned with the organizational performance rather than their individual performance. A room attendant said, *'they are not HK's customers but they are the hotel's customers [...] we have to help each other to be in the top 3 in Tripadvisor'*. The HODs encourage employees to share their knowledge amongst team members by randomly checking product and service knowledge. A waitress at the Aster said *'we have to prepare ourselves to be ready for the Q&A check by sharing and discussing our knowledge with the team'*, and this promotes the sharing of knowledge within departments. The restaurant manager of the Aster said, *'when employees know they got 96% from external audit, they revealed that it was not too difficult to meet the standards if they practiced and helped each other correct their performance'*.

### 4.2.3 Intra-departmental knowledge sharing

Analysis of the intra-departmental knowledge sharing, when knowledge is shared between HODs and employees within their departments, reveals similarities and differences in behaviour, discussed in the following section.

#### A. Similarities in knowledge sharing behaviour

The evidence from all the case studies shows that knowledge is regularly shared within departments as part of standard operations. Employees consider knowledge sharing to be a normal practice and behaviour and part of the nature of team-working.

*‘It is common to talk and share because we are working as team we have to talk, to share’ (FO manager of the Sunflower).*

A sense of team, benefit to the team, promotes a willingness to share knowledge within departments. As the FO manager of the Rosemary said, *‘we are a team, we help, remind, share, and push each other. This help us to work easily, comfortably and without pressure because everyone supports others’*. The senior waiter at the Yellow supports this claim, saying, *‘if I do not share and talk, it would affect my team’*. It is evident that employees perceive knowledge sharing among team members within departments as important. As indicated, the HODs show their commitment to building good teams by employing a referral-based selection process and sister-brother working relationships.

**Table 4.10** Similarities in knowledge sharing behaviour

Knowledge sharing Practices	FO		FB		HK	
	Syn.	Asyn.	Syn.	Asyn.	Syn.	Asyn.
A family relationship when correcting work errors and consulting each other	Yes		Yes		Yes	
HODs as role models of knowledge sharing and open communication	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Hands-on training for newcomers	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Shift handover	Yes		Yes		Yes	
New product development	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Problem solving	Yes		Yes		Yes	

Table 4.10 shows that intra-department knowledge sharing takes place when team members correct and consult each other in order to eliminate work errors. The evidence reveals that HODs of all departments (in all the case studies) employ sister-brother relationships in correcting and mentoring each other's performance during daily operational routines. Employees of all the case study hotels perceive a family-like working environment within the teams and this, in turn, promotes a close relationship among team members. As the GSA of the Daisy said, *'there are no reasons for hesitating to talk and helping to remind and check each other's work. We are like sisters-brothers here'*.

HODs pass on their knowledge and expertise by working together with employees.

*'I work with them as I want to show them my expertise [...] I share my experiences so they see a sharing model'* (FB manager of the Sunflower).

This knowledge sharing practice enables employees to observe HODs' expertise and they try to follow their example.

*'I saw my manager was serving a customer with a professional performance and I tried to do as he did'* (Waiter at the Rosemary).

It appears that the HODs are also key facilitators, encouraging employees to share knowledge.

*'We were fixing a fridge and my supervisor told me that we are team I can ask and share whatever I would love to know without any hesitation'* (Engineering staff).

Written materials, such as logbooks, memos and notepads, are used to share knowledge and information within departments, particularly during shift handovers. Employees use written channels to record and create a reference so that everyone is able to receive the same message. Employees also use Line to share knowledge and information at busy times if they have no time to talk and share (see Table 4.9). However, it is evident that employees prefer to share knowledge synchronously rather than asynchronously (Aster, Daisy and Yellow).

Knowledge is shared when employees work together to solve problems regarding customer matters. One of the FO employees said, *'staff here have been working*

*independently with less intervention from supervisors [...]. All staff are learners and teachers of the hotel so on my shift, my co-worker and I always share and discuss our knowledge and experiences especially for the guest assistant matters'* (D02). Intra-departmental knowledge sharing is found during team evaluations, notably at the Yellow.

#### B. Differences in knowledge sharing behaviour at departmental level

Although both explicit and tacit knowledge are primarily shared within departments as part of the process of daily operation, there are different activities and opportunities depending on the nature of the department, as shown in Table 4.11.

**Table 4.11** Differences in knowledge sharing behaviour in each department

Dept.	Aster	Daisy	Rosemary	Sunflower	Yellow
FO	Shift rotation / multiple roles				
	Team briefing		Monthly team meetings with GM		Job duplication
	Team evaluation		Team evaluation		Team evaluation
	Weekly 15 minute training				
	Email				
FB	Functional rotation/ multiple roles / interactive training when developing new products (occasionally)				
	Team evaluation				
	Team briefing				
	Weekly 15 minute training				
HK	Team briefing / meetings before and after work				
	Team evaluation				
	Weekly 15 minute training				

The evidence shows that the FO and FB departments, which have similar functions, focus on the customer and are related to employees' skills, are able to assign their employees to work in multiple roles and rotate them to work different functions and shifts. This provides opportunities for sharing knowledge. One of the waitresses at the Sunflower said, *'as the restaurant is not busy in the afternoon, I am assigned to work at the pool bar too... I learn more about types of drinks and how to make drinks from the bar tender'*. Likewise, the GSA at the Rosemary shows the experience of knowledge sharing when being rotated to work at night shift *'I have learnt more about assigning guest rooms from my colleague at night shift'*

Employees can feel exploited or confused when being rotated to work and experience different functions within departments or being assigned to several roles. This can lead to work errors, as a senior GSA of Yellow said, *'I was confused, tense and forgot to check minibar bills'*. However, employees perceive more benefit than cost from this practice. Job rotation and flexible roles provide opportunities for employees to share and improve their knowledge and skills. This is a long term benefit to employees of flexibility as it is beneficial to their career paths. A new waitress at the Daisy said, *'I prefer training on this multitask basis because it is an advantage and enhances my skills and knowledge which is useful for my future career'*. Similarly, senior GAS at Yellow mentioned that *'I gain knowledge from working in different functions within a department. It benefits me to get a new job or higher position'*

Some of the employees find that they perceive a short-term benefit from sharing knowledge when working in different functions. Several operational level participants mentioned that when team members are able to multi-task, all of them can work in substitute roles for others which is a benefit for taking holidays or asking for days off. For example, a waitress at the Yellow stated that *'I am willing to share my knowledge as it helps my colleague being able to work in my place ... and I can take a day off without worrying about work'*

Employees in most departments work together during the day. This provides opportunities to share knowledge at all times. On the other hand, employees in the HK department work separately and have no time to meet and share knowledge during operational times. They use shift breaks (Rosemary) and when they are preparing the maid cart and writing up the report at the end of the day (all hotels) as opportunities to share. A room attendant at the Rosemary said, *'we do not have time to talk and meet each other during the operational times. We all will meet and talk in our lunch break or after work'*.

In departments that are involved with customer knowledge and information, such as FO, the HOD assigns team members to refill and re-check customer information provided by others. This provides opportunities for knowledge sharing and eliminates miscommunication and work errors within the department, as noted in

the Yellow. The evidence shows that FO managers share their knowledge and experience with the team in order to find the best solutions when there are customer complaints or issues.

Apart from sharing knowledge during operational routines, knowledge is likely to be shared in departments that frequently develop products or service procedures, such as FB. The managers typically arrange training activities, particularly interactive training, for example brainstorming and workshops (see Table 4.11). This provides opportunities for employees to share their ideas, experiences and expertise and introduces a relaxed learning climate, fosters close relationships and provides enjoyment to employees. This results in a commitment to the organization from employees with a learning orientation, as mentioned by a waitress at the Sunflower.

As shown in Table 4.8, there are more knowledge sharing opportunities at the Aster and Daisy. Both have HRM policies which aim to improve the quality of service. As a result, the HODs of both hotels implement HRM at organizational level, in particular training and meetings. The evidence shows that the HODs of Aster and Daisy not only assign employees to correct and monitor others, but provide frequent training and development activities to improve employees' abilities and skills, enhance service quality and provide opportunities for sharing knowledge. The HODs of the Aster and Daisy arrange daily team meetings or briefings either in the morning or afternoon. In the meetings, HODs demonstrate open communication, talking openly, which makes the employees feel free to talk and share. This promotes a climate of knowledge sharing during the meetings. A room attendant at the Aster said, *'I do not hesitate to talk about what I think should not be shared as HK also even shares her life with us during the meeting'*.

It appears that employee demography, such as age range and gender mix, influences knowledge sharing behaviour. The evidence shows that the practice of knowledge sharing is more likely to be found in departments where team members have similar demographics. A waitress at the Sunflower said, *'I feel free to share everything with my team because we are women and the same age'*. On the other hand, a diversity of employee demography appears to be a barrier to knowledge sharing.

*'It is a big challenge to me in terms of training migrant employees (Burmese) who cannot properly communicate in the Thai language and have no sense of working in the service industry' (HK manager of the Yellow).*

### **4.3 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the findings from the empirical research which involves multiple sources of data including HRM documentation, non-participant observation (in public places) and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with staff working at various levels, from 5 boutique hotels in Chiang Mai city, Thailand. In order to deeply understand the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in small and medium sized boutique hotels, this chapter employs a two-step thematic analysis technique at the various levels of organizational hierarchy, firstly an individual case analysis followed by a cross-case analysis.

Broadly, the analysis indicates two kinds of hotel operation across the five case studies, professional hotel management companies (Aster and Daisy), and family-owned and operated hotels (Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow). The ownership appears to influence the way the case study hotels formulate their HRM. As the analysis indicates, all the hotels have some shared priorities, such as a small number of employees developing a commitment to teamwork. These shared priorities lead them to use functional flexibility approach as part of HRM, including hiring flexible employees, designing work to be flexible with multiple roles, rotating employees into several functions, encouraging flexible roles and flexible implementation of HRM appropriate to the nature of each department. This flexibility of HRM practice promotes a climate of knowledge sharing in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand as it offers a range of opportunities for employees to share their knowledge and expertise, particularly within departments. Although the functional flexibility of HRM can be costly in the beginning, it promotes the sharing of knowledge because the intrinsic benefits in the long term are perceived by employees. This intrinsic motivation includes the improvement of knowledge and skills and their wider operational knowledge, which is necessary for their future career paths as well as future their career opportunities. Some employees find that when team members

are able to multi-task it means all are able to work in substitute roles which is a benefit to them when taking holidays or asking for days off (their own personal flexibility).

The findings also reveal that a shared priority of developing a commitment to teamwork leads all the case study hotels to build close relationships within the organization by applying a family approach to their HRM, reducing the difference in organizational status, communicating a sense of family and listening to employees. In order to build this family atmosphere, a sister-brother relationship approach is evidence as part of most HRM practices, including ways of communicating, correcting and mentoring each other during operational hours and performance appraisal. A referral-based selection process is used by HODs. Employing family relationships in HRM is seen to promote good teamwork and a close relationship within departments, which, in turn, fosters a willingness to share knowledge. Knowledge sharing in the departments is enhanced when employees are from similar demographics profiles, such as age and gender. In contrast, a diversity of employee demography, particularly nationality, appears to be a barrier to knowledge sharing (as noted in the Yellow).

HRM managers and GMs are key people in sustaining good family relationships, particularly when they deploy the MBWA technique. This practice results in employees perceiving a level of organizational support. These perceptions are necessary for knowledge sharing across the entire organization. HODs are found to be the principle drivers of establishing a climate of knowledge sharing within departments. They are role models of open communication which fosters a climate of knowledge sharing during team meetings. They are also social referents of knowledge sharing, as they pass on their knowledge and expertise, working alongside employees, and these employees observe them carrying out a high standard of service and try to follow their example.

The findings reveal a difference in the focus on achieving competitive advantage in each case study, such as service performance improvement and cost reduction. Competitive advantage strategy approach not only differentiates the intentions of HRM, it influences the frequency of knowledge sharing opportunities, such as



regular meetings and training. HRM which is focused on enhancing quality of service appears to provide more vertical knowledge sharing opportunities (as noted in the Aster and Daisy) than these which are concerned with cost reduction (as noted in the Yellow). It recognizes that a diversity of employee demographics profiles, particularly language and nationality, generates a barrier to knowledge sharing. Ultimately, this can lead to operational conflict between departments as evident in the Yellow. These research findings offer valuable insight in to knowledge sharing behaviour across and within five boutique hotels. It highlights the range of approach and practices which occur in different departments and at different levels. Similarities are also evident across the cases and within department. These findings provide useful insights to developing the frameworks developed previously (Figure 2.3 and 2.4).

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

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The discussion is organized under themes based on the findings from Chapter 4. Firstly, the chapter discusses the similarities of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour across the five case studies. Then the chapter compares and discusses the different HRM practices associated with knowledge sharing behaviour of the five case study hotels. In doing this, an empirical framework is developed, which depicts HRM and knowledge sharing practices in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand based on the fieldwork, which is explored and compared to the conceptual framework. Finally, the chapter demonstrates how this study fills the research gaps.

### **5.1 The Similarities of HRM in Fostering Knowledge Sharing Behaviour across the Case Studies**

This study examines the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in the boutique hotel sector. To achieve the stated aim, the study explores and evaluates the literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour and develops a conceptual framework, which is presented in Chapter 2: Literature Review. The conceptual framework is used as a guide for the data collection. This section critically analyses and evaluates the evidence about the role of HRM approaches and practices in facilitating employee knowledge sharing behaviour in line with the existing literature. The analysis of findings indicates that all the case study hotels are concerned with organizational resources and the commitment to building a family-like working environment. They typically apply a functional flexibility approach to workforce deployment and a family-oriented relationship in their HRM approaches. The following section discusses these approaches to HRM and their roles in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

#### **5.1.1 A Functional Flexibility in HRM Practices**

One of the HRM practices found across the five case study hotels is the use of functional flexibility. The participants at the organizational level, including HRM managers from the Aster, Daisy and Rosemary, and the general managers of the Yellow and Sunflower, all mentioned that they require employees who are willing

to work flexibly and rotate them to work in multiple roles. They may be concerned about the limited resources, financial and human, available to operations. This is demonstrated by the statement of the HRM manager at the Daisy, *'since we have few staff, they will be rotated to work in all functions within their departments'*. This supports the literature on HRM in SMEs (Hoque, 2000; Harney and Nolan, 2015), which highlights that, typically, SMEs have limited resources, specifically financial and human resources, and as a result work design practices require multitasking staff to quickly take over colleagues' duties. Therefore, employees are often responsible for a variety of tasks and need to know the specific character of their colleagues' jobs.

In response to HRM priorities including limited financial and human resources available to operations, functional flexibility of HRM is typically implemented by HODs within their departments. For example, HODs tend to select employees who are able to work on several tasks and rotate them to work in several areas within departments. HODs try to build acceptance and a culture of work flexibility across their employees. Functional flexibility is not only implemented for operational employees, it is expected and encouraged among line managers. HODs often have to do operational tasks alongside employees, particularly at busy periods. Functional flexibility in HRM is perceived and experienced by the participants at the operational level. Employees at the Daisy mentioned that they are employed because of their experience in various jobs and their ability to work across a department. Similarly, in the Rosemary Hotel, the waiter showed his understanding of working in multiple roles and helping out within the team, as they have only a small number of team members. Likewise, operational employees showed their positive attitudes to working flexibly when a senior room attendant at the Aster remarked, *'I was taught to help others since my first day here; when my tasks are finished I have to help others. It happened automatically'*.

The exploration of functional flexibility in HRM in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai supports the existing knowledge that functional flexibility is increasingly used in the hotel industry across the world, for example, in Australian luxury hotels (Knox and Walsh, 2005), British hotels (Lowe 2002) and Malaysian hotels (Ahmad et al.,

2015). However, the application of functional flexibility in SME boutique hotels differs from larger hotels. Larger hotels use functional flexibility in HRM across the entire organization to enhance their employees' knowledge and skills outside their department (Lowe, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005; Lastra et al., 2014). On the other hand, SME boutique hotels in Thailand in Chiang Mai, Thailand use functional flexibility in HRM mainly within departments, particularly within FO and FB, where similar tasks and employee skills are required. This finding supports the work of Guerrier and Lockwood (1989) who assert that flexible working in SME hotels in the UK can only be achieved between very similar functions and typically within departments. However, it is evident that functional flexibility approach could not be implemented in a department which needs specific skilled employees, such as the kitchen. This finding is incorporated with the generic literature on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour, which mainly conducted with knowledge-intensive companies and need specialisations. Those companies tend to use functional flexibility to be part of collaborative HRM practices in order to facilitate employees' interaction and build networks of relationships (Donate et al., 2016).

### **Functional flexibility in HRM, perceived organizational support (POS) and individual KSB**

It appears that the use of functional flexibility allows for multiple roles and job rotation in all five case study hotels. This approach to HRM sometimes generates a cost to employees, who feel exploited or confused when working in multiple roles which can lead to work errors, as mentioned by a senior GSA at the Yellow. The cost and workload of working flexibly are also found in luxury hotels. Knox and Walsh (2005) surveyed the use of functional flexibility in Australian luxury hotels and highlight that functional flexibility merely promotes task enlargement, and employees might perceive that they are expected to understand and work in multiple roles.

When comparing costs to benefits, employees perceive functional flexibility as supporting them to get personal benefits both in a long-term, such as the enhancement of knowledge and skill for better jobs and short terms and in a short-term benefit, for example the opportunity to take holidays. It is evident that

employees perceive being trained and rotated to work in multiple roles provides them with opportunities to share and improve their knowledge and skills, which benefit their career paths. This perception, in turn, encourages employees to be willing to share their knowledge (as mentioned by a waitress at the Sunflower, a GSA at the Yellow and a waitress at the Daisy). This finding supports social exchange research (Blau, 1964; Kim and Ko, 2014; Iqbal, 2015) that holds that when one analyses the perceived ratio of benefits to costs people base their actions and decisions on the expectation of perceived rewards. Once they perceive the implemented HRM practices to provide benefits rather than generate costs, they seem to be engaged with, and willing to share, their knowledge. Furthermore, several employees remarked that when team members were able to multitask, it meant all of them were able to work in substitute roles for others and this was a benefit for taking holidays or asking for days off. A waitress at the Yellow said, *'I am willing to share my knowledge as it helps my colleagues to be able to work in my place [...] and I can take a day off without worrying about work'*. This is covered by Depta and Slocinska (2015) who say that taking holidays and asking for days off in SMEs is only possible when employees have explained and passed their duties onto their colleagues.

From these examples, it is important to highlight that the perception of functional flexibility in HRM practices supporting employees to achieve personal benefits, fosters them to share their knowledge when working in multiple roles. These findings are incorporated in the generic literature (Kim and Ko, 2014; Liu and Liu, 2011; Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011) which indicates that individuals are willing to share their knowledge when they perceive organizational support to improve their performance (Chiang et al., 2011). However, previous literature (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011; Foss et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2011; Kim and Lee, 2013; Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005) suggests that high-commitment HRM practices, such as selective staffing, comprehensive training and development, fair feedback, job autonomy and task identity, provide employees with evidence that HRM practice supports them to achieve better performance (Chiang et al., 2011; Fong et al., 2011), and increase their level of self-efficacy (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005). Conversely, the current study indicates that

functional flexibility in HRM facilitates multiple roles and job rotation. This approach may initially seem to be a cost for employees because they can feel exploited or overloaded (Knox and Walsh, 2005). Initially the employer gains the most from this practice, as they can respond flexibly to operational and staffing situations. However, employees become willing to share knowledge if they perceive these practices as supporting them, and leading to personal benefits, such as providing them with the opportunity to improve their knowledge and longer term career opportunities, or the opportunity to take holidays.

It is a distinctive finding that the boutique hotel SMEs in Chiang Mai, Thailand in this study facilitate knowledge sharing by using functional flexibility approaches which shape their recruitment and selection decisions and a multiple roles-work design. These approaches provide employees with evidence that such HRM practices support and benefit their own skills, abilities and work life balance. These perceptions of organizational support (POS), in turn, fosters employees' willingness to share their knowledge.

### **Functional flexibility in HRM and intra-departmental knowledge sharing**

The literature specific to hotel industry reveals that the larger hotels tend to use functional flexibility in HRM in formal ways. They designate employees to work flexibly across departments and create cross-training programmes and incentive reward schemes for employees who engage with these programmes. This provides opportunities for knowledge sharing across the entire organization (Lowe, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005; Lastra et al., 2014). Meanwhile, the current study indicates that SME boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand use less formal HRM practices and apply functional flexibility only within departments. Therefore, this practice only allows employees opportunities to share and enhance their knowledge and abilities within their departments rather than across other departments (for more discussion see Section 5.2.1). As a result, employees are more likely to engage with intra-department knowledge sharing behaviour which may limit the opportunities for employees to collaborate and share knowledge between departments. This finding, that functional flexibility provides opportunities for employees to share knowledge within departments, adds to the previous literature (Wu and Lee, 2016;

Iqbal, 2015; Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005) which indicates that team-based HRM practices promote a knowledge sharing climate within a team or department.

It can be inferred that the use of functional flexibility in HRM in SME boutique hotels, such as selecting people who will multitask, using job rotation within departments and multiple roles, provides employees with evidence that these HRM practices help them get personal benefits, such as their own career progression and personal flexibility for vacations and time off. These perceptions of functional flexibility in HRM, in turn, encourage employees to share their knowledge. These findings support the previous literature on knowledge sharing behaviour in SMEs (Gravesend and Damanpour, 2007; Chen and Huang, 2007), which characterizes SMEs as nimble, flexible, lean, and able to support knowledge sharing among employees. On the other hand, SMEs which focus on formal structures without allowing possibilities for flexibility may be unable to achieve the benefits of knowledge sharing activities. However, functional flexibility is implemented by HODs within their department, and, therefore, employees are more likely to engage with intra-departmental knowledge sharing behaviour rather than sharing across departments. This limits a wider organizational knowledge sharing behaviour.

### **5.1.2 A Thai Family-oriented Relationship in HRM Practices**

#### **Family activities in HRM and vertical knowledge sharing behaviour**

The evidence shows that GMs or HRM managers from all of the case study hotels adopt a family relationship in managing employees. This is exhibited in similar ways, for example, all participants at the organizational level across the case study hotels highlight that they always have lunch with their staff, either in the hotel canteen or outside. In the Daisy Hotel, HODs are designated to cook for all staff once a week. A public area attendant at the Aster mentioned that she has the opportunity to have lunch with the management. In addition, in the Sunflower Hotel, the GM always communicates a sense of family to his employees as he believes that a family relationship can reduce conflict in the workplace. Although, a family relationship approach in HRM is generally used in SMEs, for example there is a high reliance on the use of referrals and references, providing an informal and personal atmosphere,

and open communication throughout the organization (Cooper and Burke, 2011; Nickson, 2013; Harney and Nolan (2015). A family relationship in HRM used in all of five case studies seem to be related to Thai family culture , where family members like to spend time doing activities together, in particular, activities that are related to meals such as cooking and eating (Aksornprom, 1993).

The reasons for this HRM approach are not clear from the data. Only two of the case study hotels (Sunflower and Daisy) mentioned the essential family relationships in HRM. At the Daisy Hotel, the HRM manager commented that a family-like working environment is important for them to build a collaborative climate, which is necessary for their operations. In the Sunflower Hotel the GM said that a family relationship could reduce conflict in the workplace. Clearly, the evidence shows that family activity in HRM establishes a perceived family atmosphere in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai. This is illustrated by the fact that most of the participants mentioned ‘home’ or ‘family’ as well as showing a feeling of harmony at their workplace, as shown in Table 5.1.

**Table5. 1** Examples of quotes demonstrating the perception of family-like working environments

Quote	Participant
<i>‘Everyone here is like my <b>family members</b>’</i>	A GSA at the Rosemary
<i>‘I feel like a <b>family</b> here’</i>	A room attendant at the Aster
<i>‘We like this <b>family</b> atmosphere’</i>	A waitress at the Daisy
<i>‘We are at the same level in a big <b>family</b>’</i>	GM at the Sunflower
<i>‘I feel harmony like <b>home</b>’</i>	A waitress at the Yellow
<i>‘Here is like my second <b>home</b>’</i>	An engineer staff at the Daisy

This perception of a family atmosphere promotes a close relationship and open communication, which encourage vertical knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai. To illustrate this claim, a public area attendant at the Aster mentioned that she openly talks with the management when they have lunch together. Similarly, a waiter at the Rosemary showed his relationship with the owner and his willingness for vertical knowledge sharing behaviour by saying,



*'since the owner takes me out for lunch, we are close to each other and I always send her pictures of other restaurants' decorations and promotions which I think is useful for our hotel'*. Likewise, the evidence from the Daisy and Sunflower shows that employees do not hesitate to talk with the managers or owners. This finding is incorporated with Slocinska and Depta (2015) who examined knowledge sharing behaviour in SMEs and highlighted that knowledge sharing behaviour is probably influenced by direct relationships inside the work environment and is usually based on spontaneously developed behaviours rooted in close group relationships, in particular a family relationship. Similarly, the literature on HRM boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand (Konrad and Ekiem, 2011; Chernbumroong, 2015) indicates that the majority of boutique hotels in Chiang Mai are like family units, and the owners treat their employees as members of the family. Employees have a personal relationship with the management team and are able to communicate directly with management, like members of a family. This may be due to the fact that Thai culture has a high level of commitment and loyalty to the member group, particularly the family, extended family or extended relationships. The younger members are open to their elders in the family to show their respect (Hofstede and Bond, 1984). It is evident that a family relationship is adopted in the ways HODs manage their employees.

### **A Thai family-oriented relationship in HRM practices and intra-departmental knowledge sharing behaviour**

The evidence shows that HODs adopt family-oriented relationships associated with Thai culture in the recruitment and selection processes, communication practices, collaboration and feedback of each other. These practices foster intra-departmental knowledge sharing behaviour, as discussed below.

### **Referral-based selection and a sense of community**

It is evident that HODs emphasize family-oriented relationships in the recruitment and selection process. The majority of participants mentioned that their friends, relatives or former colleagues suggested they apply for the job. A senior waitress at the Sunflower said *'my friend who works here suggest me to apply for the waitress'*.

The HODs also tend to select candidates who they already know (as mentioned by the HK manager of the Daisy). This results in almost all the employees being Thais who have a shared language and common understanding. This helps them communicate easily and, in turn, promotes a sense of community and a willingness to share knowledge with each other. To emphasize this point, the housekeeping manager at the Yellow remarked upon the difficulty of communicating with non-Thai workers was a barrier to knowledge sharing. These findings are incorporated within the work of Aklamanu et al. (2016) which shows that the selection of employees who already have knowledge of each other and share common values creates a familiarity which may help establish a sense of community and facilitate willingness for knowledge sharing behaviour.

It can be inferred that similar workforce demographics, particularly nationality and language, can establish a sense of community necessary for knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand. This finding differs from the study of Yang (2009), which states that employee demographics, such as age, gender, education level, or tenure in the industry, do not significantly affect individual attitudes to learning and sharing knowledge.

Therefore, this finding is recognized as an ongoing challenge for the hotel industry, particularly now there is free labour mobility in the hotel sector across South East Asia since the establishment of the Asian Economic Community (AEC) (ASEAN Briefing, 2016). The workforce is free to work in any AEC country, and Thailand is considered one of the most attractive for hotel and tourism industry workers. Consequently, skilled workers with a good command of English from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, look for job opportunities in Thailand. In addition, unskilled labourers from countries with lower wages, such as Burma, are preferred by SME hotels (which have limited financial resources) in Thailand over Thai workers (ASEAN Briefing, 2016). This might lead to a rise in the diversity of workforce demographics, particularly culture and language which create perceptions of difficulties in communication (among employees) and is a barrier to knowledge sharing (Riege, 2005; Shen et al., 2014). The challenge for the boutique hotel in Chiang Mai industry is how to balance the diversity of employees and the

improvement of service quality through knowledge sharing behaviour as well as managing these perceptions.

### **Sister-brother communication and collaboration and a sense of community in a team**

The evidence shows family-oriented relationship as parts of HRM are cultivated as part of communication and collaboration within departments. HODs from all the case study hotels mentioned that they behave and communicate with their team members like sisters or brothers when they work together and during briefings, training and mentoring activities. Operational employees across the hotels perceived a sister-brother relationship when working with their HODs and correcting each other. Several examples of HODs and employees emphasize that the adoption of a sister-brother relationship in communication, collaboration and correction of each other helps generate a close relationship within the departments and encourage knowledge sharing. This may be due to the fact that sister-brother, or 'phi' and 'nong', are familial words 'phi' is used to refer to the elder and 'nong' is the younger. These words are used to indicate both closeness and respect within a Thai family (Cultural Atlas: Thai culture).

The evidence indicates that a sister-brother relationship in correcting each other makes employees perceive their knowledge to be important and have some influence in the teams, as they are allowed to correct others workers' errors, including HODs. Additionally, some employees (from the Aster and Yellow) said that their perception of sharing knowledge is important for their team performance. These perceptions are defined as sense of community, which fosters knowledge sharing within departments. McMillan and Chavis (1986. P 9) define sense of community as 'a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together'. McMillan and Chavis (1986) also suggest that sense of community is as a tool for facilitating free and open communities, which in turn, fosters understanding and cooperation within communities. Therefore, it is important to highlight that the adoption of family-oriented relationships in HRM practices in SME boutique hotels in Chiang Mai,

Thailand establishes close relationships and helps generate a sense of community in teams and this, in turn, fosters knowledge sharing behaviour.

This finding differs from the majority of the previous studies undertaken with knowledge intensive companies, where knowledge is associated with value and power (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011). These studies highlight that high-commitment HRM builds trust, and trust facilitates and encourages team knowledge sharing behaviour. Trust is found to significantly influence knowledge sharing behaviour in those who perceive knowledge as power and who risk losing their power if they share their knowledge (Wu and Lee, 2016; Casimir et al., 2012; Jimenez and Valle, 2013).

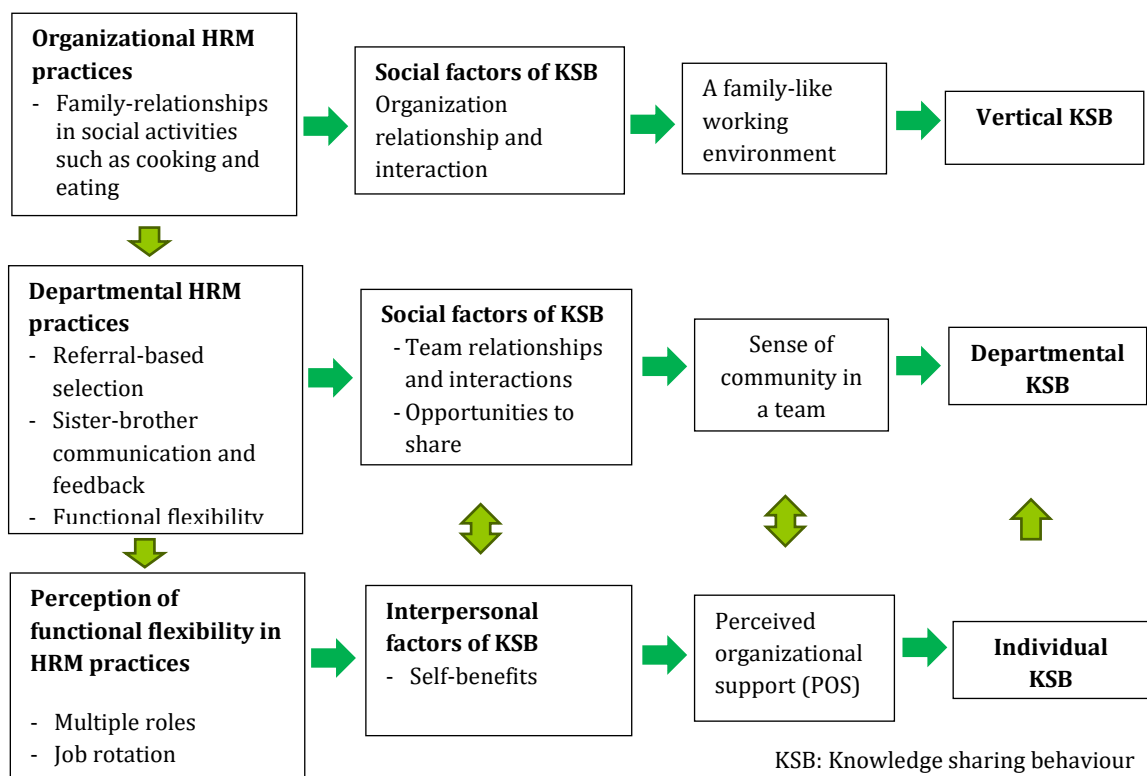
In contrast, the current study focuses on SME hotels, and one of the unique characteristics of SMEs is a low hierarchical structure which naturally generates low competitiveness within the organization (Harney and Nolan, 2014). Therefore, employees may not perceive they are losing power when they share knowledge. The participants did not identify trust as an issue influencing their willingness to share knowledge (Amayah, 2013; Yeo and Gold, 2014). All the participants have social connections and familial ties, which means they typically already trust each other. As a result, they do not need to recognize or talk about trust when sharing knowledge. Rather, they recognize a sense of community (or team) which encourages them to share their knowledge within the team.

This sense of community combined with the Thai cultural behaviour of collectivism (Hofstede and Bond, 1984) fosters knowledge sharing behaviour. Thais are recognized as kind-hearted, avoiding competition, with very strong family connections and commitment to the members of a group (TAT, 2014). Thais are socialized and encouraged to recognize themselves as part of a collective team, group or family. They prefer to be within a group rather than alone. They find their relationships warm and enjoyable and would normally help each other during difficult times (Hofstede and Bond, 1984). The findings indicate that employees are willing to share knowledge when they perceive themselves to be part of a team, and this is commonly found in Thai/Lan-Na boutique hotels (Konrad and Ekiem, 2011). This finding is similar to previous studies undertaken with public sector

organizations (Amayah, 2013) and virtual communities (Chiu et al., 2006) where their employees typically feel sharing knowledge is not sensitive, does not lead to loss of power and have strong feeling towards community. These perceptions influence the willingness for knowledge sharing behaviour without concern for issues of trust (Bakker et al., 2006; Wee, 2012; Amayah, 2013; Chiu et al., 2006).

Overall, the existing understanding of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour is predominantly generated by studies conducted in the context of knowledge intensive companies (Wu and Lee, 2016; Casimir et al., 2012; Jimenez and Valle, 2013) or larger hotels (Bouncken, 2002; Knox and Walsh, 2005; Kim et al., 2013; Tang et al., 2015). These studies suggest that such companies typically use sophisticated and formal HRM practices to foster knowledge sharing behaviour (for more detail see Chapter 2). This current study, undertaken with SME boutique hotels in Thailand, adds new knowledge about the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour, as shown in Figure 5.1.

**Figure 5.1** The relationship between HRM practice and knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels, in Chiang Mai.



**Source:** developed by the researcher based on the fieldwork (2018)

It is evident that employees' perception of organizational support encourages them to share their knowledge. This finding emphasises our knowledge of the role of HRM practices in promoting sense of POS, which in turn, fosters individual knowledge sharing behaviour in both knowledge intensive companies (Kim and Ko, 2014; Liu and Liu, 2011) and labour intensive companies such as SME boutique hotels. However, there are a different range of HRM practices promoting POS adopted in those companies. The evidence shows that all the case study hotels employ functional flexibility in their HRM practices, such as selecting multitasking people, job rotation within departments and multiple roles. These practices provide employees with evidence that they are supported by the organization to get personal benefits, such as career progression and personal flexibility for vacations and time off. This finding offers distinctive insights on the existing literature conducted with knowledge intensive companies (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011). The literature suggests that high-performance HRM practices, such as selective staffing, comprehensive training and development, fair feedback, job autonomy and task identity, all enhance the personal self-efficacy and sense of responsibility or accomplishment. Once, employees perceive these HRM practices supporting them to exhibit higher performance, they seem to become individually engaged with knowledge sharing behaviour (Foss et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2011).

All the case study hotels adopt Thai family culture in their HRM activities. The evidence shows that HODs adopt a family relationship in their recruitment and selection processes, communication, collaboration and feedback of each other within their departments. These HRM practices establish social capital elements of knowledge sharing behaviour such as close relationships and a sense of community with the shared language. When these perceptions combine with POS generated from functional flexibility, it encourages employees to share their knowledge without concern for issues of trust. This is a distinctive finding that employees in labour intensive organizations, particularly in collectivist social settings, do not recognize about trust when sharing knowledge within teams. On the other hand, knowledge intensive organizations employ high-commitment HRM to build trust,

which is found to significantly influence team knowledge sharing behaviour (Wu and Lee, 2016; Casimir et al., 2012; Jimenez and Valle, 2013).

It appears that HODs mainly implement functional flexibility and family relationships in HRM within departments, and therefore employees are likely to engage with sharing knowledge within departments rather than across the entire organization. However, it is evidence of vertical knowledge sharing behaviour between owners, senior managers and operative employees. This might be due to both the owners and general managers undertaking Thai family activities with employees, particularly related to meals, such as cooking and eating together. This promotes a family-like working environment in all the case studies, which leads employees to feel free and comfortable talking and sharing their knowledge directly with the management and operational employees.

As demonstrated in Figure 5.1, all the case studies in the research actively foster individual, departmental and vertical knowledge sharing behaviour but not all have HRM practices which foster knowledge sharing across the entire organization. Therefore, there is no linkage between departmental and organizational knowledge sharing behaviour. However, there is evidence of HRM practices in building the linkage between departmental and organizational knowledge sharing behaviour found in some case studies. The next section discusses this issue further.

## **5.2 HRM Practice and Knowledge Sharing across the Entire Organization**

### **5.2.1 HRM Practices Associated with FTFC and Knowledge Sharing Opportunities**

The evidence from the Aster and Daisy shows that HRM practices associated with face-to-face communication (FTFC) foster knowledge sharing behaviour across and throughout the entire organization, but not all the case study hotels have this HRM approach to facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour, as shown in Table 5.2.

**Table5. 2** Activities where knowledge is shared outside departments

Activity	Aster	Daisy	Rosemary	Sunflower	Yellow
Annual meetings	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
Monthly GM meetings	✓	✓	Within departments	✗	✗
Daily morning briefings	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Management by walking around	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Communicating shared vision	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗

**Source:** collated from fieldwork by the researcher (2017)

It is evident that HRM activities, such as meetings, facilitate knowledge sharing throughout the organization. To illustrate this point, the HRM manager at the Aster mentioned that she organizes the GM meeting twice a year for the management team and employees to meet and share knowledge, such as hotel performance (hotel ranking and financial), customer feedback and team performance, in order to improve the overall hotel performance. This is similar to the practice used at the Yellow Hotel, where the managing director arranges annual meetings to share the hotel performance as well as listen to employees' opinions about any problems in the entire organization. Interestingly, it is evident that some employees choose not to share knowledge in meetings as they do not perceive they are supported by the organization, as found at the Yellow. It is compulsory to attend the meetings; employees do not attend of their own volition so they are reluctant to engage.

It is important to highlight that formal HRM practices, such as meetings with senior managers in either annual meeting or monthly GM meeting, may provide opportunities for knowledge sharing across entire organizations. This finding is allied to the study of Salis and William (2008), who state that HRM practices associated with FTFC, such as problem-solving groups, meetings made up of senior managers and employees, and meetings of line managers and employees, provide opportunities and effective learning environments for sharing knowledge in order to enhance the labour productivity necessary for organizational performance. However, the meeting with managers do not necessarily encourage knowledge sharing if employees sense their voice is undervalued or unheard (as seen at the



Yellow). This finding is consistent with the work of Kim and Ko (2014) who state that HRM practices which are intended to promote employee knowledge sharing behaviour are only successful when they make employees feel valued by the organization or there is POS.

Other HRM practices associated with FTFC are daily morning team briefings, found in the Aster and Daisy. In the morning briefings, guest knowledge, customer complaints, the business situation and general information is shared between the GMs and HODs. Then this knowledge and information is passed to the operational employees the same day, either synchronously (in the team briefing) or asynchronously via Line (according to the Restaurant manager at the Aster and FO manager at the Daisy). This practice provides an opportunity for knowledge to be shared with all employees (as noted by a security worker at the Daisy). This made a positive impression on the researcher in her role as a customer. However, not all the case study hotels arrange formal meetings (see Table 5.1), and it is evident that ineffectual knowledge sharing between departments can be found in those case study hotels (Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow), as in the example of upgraded rooms provided by front office staff without informing the housekeeping staff at the Rosemary Hotel. Similarly, evidence from the Yellow Hotel shows that employees are not always advised of changes. This ineffectual knowledge sharing may cause work errors and conflict within the organization, however there are insufficient examples to provide conclusive evidence to indicate how ineffectual knowledge sharing negatively impacts organizational performance, particularly regarding quality of service. Therefore, further study on this relationship is necessary.

The findings indicate that the use of unstructured HRM practices, namely management by walking around (MBWA), provides informal opportunities for knowledge sharing between senior managers and employees. This practice is only found in the Aster, Daisy and Sunflower, which always have their HRM managers or GMs on duty. An example from the Sunflower is the GM's claim that they are always on duty and walk around the hotel to talk to and meet with employees at all levels. This helps address operational problems, as well as enabling them to help employees if necessary. The case is similar at the Aster, where the HRM manager

mentioned that they have a manager on duty (MOD) to walk around the hotel to assist all employees. Several employees of the Aster, Daisy and Sunflower mentioned that this practice (MBWA) provides positive informal opportunities for knowledge sharing between management and employees, and, combined with the family-relationship in HRM (discussed in Section 5.2), leads to a willingness to engage in an informal opportunity to share knowledge.

Not all the case study hotels are concerned with creating activities that ensure information and knowledge flows across the entire organization, for the benefit of the organization. Only three hotels, which have HRM managers and a GM, employ MBWA. This practice provides informal opportunities for knowledge sharing and, when combined with the development of a family relationship, improves employee willingness to take informal opportunities to share their knowledge. This finding is similar to the studies of Yang (2004, 2009) which examine knowledge sharing behaviour in international hotels in Taiwan. The studies show that spontaneous FTFC and informal social activities enable employees to feel more open in discussing and sharing job-related matters during working hours than planned social interactions (workshops, meetings and training programmes). This could be due to a cooperative climate of low competitiveness in the hotel industry and specially the SME boutique hotel sector in Thailand (as discussed in the previous section). This claim is supported by the study of Boh and Wang (2013) who assert that organizations where employees perceive a cooperative climate, prefer to use informal personalization mechanisms or informal opportunities and activities, such as talking in the staff canteen, to share knowledge.

It can be seen that only the Aster and the Daisy have HRM practices associated with FTFC, both formally and informally. These HRM practices provide more opportunities for knowledge to be shared throughout the organization than the other case study hotels. This may be due to the fact that both are operated by professional management companies and are structured organizations. They have both a GM and HRM manager who are considered key facilitators of knowledge sharing across the entire organization (as discussed above). In contrast, the other case study hotels have an owner as a manager, and HRM managers who are

responsible for multiple-roles within the organization. This is similar to the study of Arunothaipipat (n.d.) of HRM systems in small hotels located in Cha-am beach in Thailand which indicates the majority of small hotels are independently owned and operated by the owners, who have an inadequate knowledge and understanding of HRM, and who have no HR department. The fact that HRM managers are given multiple roles and responsibilities shows that less emphasis is put on developing human capital, and the HRM managers cannot make this their primary focus. Therefore, the evidence shows that knowledge sharing takes place mostly within departments and there is ineffectual sharing between departments in the Rosemary, Sunflower and Yellow. The findings suggest that GMs and HRM managers are key facilitators of knowledge sharing across entire organizations and this is consistent with the studies of, for example, Hsu (2006) and Fey and Furu (2008), who investigate the role of top managers and organizational knowledge sharing behaviour. They suggest that top and senior managers are highly involved in motivating employees learning and sharing behaviour across the entire organization.

Furthermore, the Aster and Daisy hotels focus on delivering excellent service and consider employee development to be an important aspect, as shown by the vision of the Aster which is to provide 'personalized passionate service by a dedicated professional team offering tailor made memorable experiences'. The HRM manager of the Daisy mentioned her aim is to enhance employees' abilities to deliver high quality service. Therefore, they create both formal and informal activities to enable employees, their departments and the whole organization to communicate effectively to ensure information and knowledge flows across the entire hotel. This finding supports Wee (2012) and Bounken (2002) who highlight that for an organization to achieve a competitive advantage through employees' knowledge sharing behaviour, knowledge must be shared across and throughout the entire organization.

### **5.2.2 Effective communication, sense of belonging and organizational knowledge sharing behaviour**

Interestingly, only the Aster exhibits a strong commitment to achieving a higher hotel ranking (on Tripadvisor) of the five hotels in Chiang Mai city. They continually communicate this goal and share the feedback and comments from external and internal audits across the entire organization through many channels, such as the GM meetings, daily meetings, reports, Line and notice boards. The HODs communicate this mission to their employees, as can be seen from the restaurant manager's comment, *'I show them (employees) our score from external audit at 96% and tell them that this high score would never be achieved if they did not practice and help each other correct their performance'*. This quote shows that the HODs of the Aster communicate the importance of employees for achieving organizational goals. Effective communication, combined with a family-relationship in HRM, promotes a sense of belonging to a team and organization. This helps employees share their knowledge within the department and voluntarily share with employees from other departments (in the Aster). Examples can be seen of both room attendants and waitresses (at the Aster) saying that they correct and remind each other so that they can get rid of all errors and get a high score from external audits, demonstrating voluntarily knowledge sharing behaviour. A room attendant showed her commitment to the hotel as an organization by saying, *'they are not HK's customers but they are the hotel's customers'*. These examples demonstrate how employees are aware that their individual contribution to knowledge sharing supports the improvement of the organization as a whole, and they have a level of influence within the organization and a willingness to sacrifice for the organization. This awareness is defined as 'sense of belonging to an organization' (McMillan and Chavis, 1986. P 10).

It can be interpreted that a sense of belonging and the perceived shared vision and goal from effective communication combined with a family-oriented relationship in HRM (in the Aster) promote knowledge sharing both within and between departments. This finding is consistent with the qualitative study of Mueller (2012) who explores the knowledge sharing between project teams in engineering

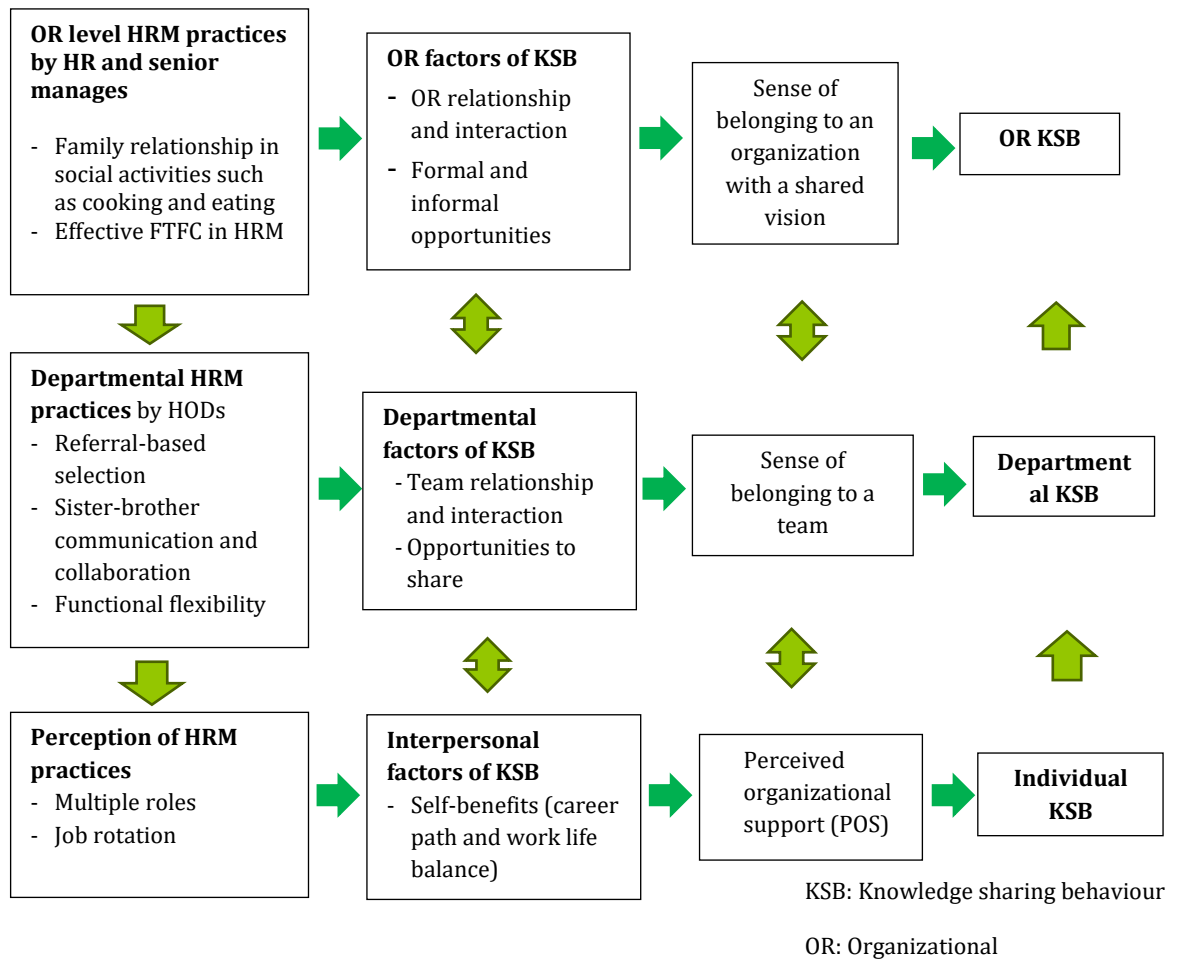
consultancies in Austria. Mueller (2012) asserts that employees share their knowledge between teams because they have high levels of personal responsibility and job orientation and perceive the shared leadership roles of the team leader. In both the study of Mueller (2012) and this current study, there appears to be strong evidence of personal responsibility influencing knowledge sharing behaviour. However, the aspects of job orientation and shared roles of the team leaders are less clear in the current study, instead, there is a strong family-oriented relationship aspect which promotes knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai. The reasons for this inconsistency might be the Thai cultural behaviour of collectivism (Hofstede and Bond, 1984) (for more detail see Section 5.2.4.2) and the nature of the hotel industry. The industry is labour-intensive (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2013) and relies on high levels of individual and departmental interaction and work interdependence (O'Fallon and Rutherford, 2011; Jones and Lockwood, 1989). The study of Lam and Lambermont-Ford (2010) asserts that in an operating adhocracy, where interdependent teamwork is important, knowledge sharing behaviour is influenced by the incentive of socialization and the perception of being part of a community, and this is evident in the case of the Aster.

### **5.3 An Empirical Framework**

There are two main gaps in the existing knowledge of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. Firstly, the majority of previous studies have been conducted with knowledge intensive companies or larger hotels. These organizations find knowledge sharing to be a crucial tool for enhancing organizational innovation and, as a consequence, they have HRM strategies and practices created for knowledge sharing and development (Pervaiz et al., 2016). This research appears to overlook the SME sector, and specifically the boutique hotels sector, the core business strategy of which is to deliver a high level of personal service while dealing with the constraints of small and medium sized businesses (Day et al., 2012). This industry sector is more likely to use informal HRM approaches and practices and exhibit less sophisticated approaches to HRM than multinational hotels (Nickson, 2013; Harney and Nolan, 2015). Secondly, the existing knowledge is generated from the investigation of a single-level of HRM and

knowledge sharing behaviour, either individual, team or organizational (Mat et al., 2016; Bouncken, 2002; Lowe, 2002; Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2017; Knox and Walsh 2005), and mainly undertaken at one level of organizational actors, particularly HR and senior managers who understand and implement HRM practices to support knowledge sharing behaviour within the organization. This does not provide a clear or complete picture of knowledge sharing in the entire organization. To overcome this omission in understanding, this current study examines the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels by employing a multilevel approach to HRM involving 40 participants at the organizational, departmental and operative levels of five boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand. In doing so , the current study can identify the role and range of HRM practices in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in different contexts, such as individual or collective, departments or organizations, and horizontally or vertically. This leads to the development of an empirical framework for the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand, as shown in Figure 5.2.

**Figure 5.2** Empirical framework of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in Boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand



**Source:** developed by the researcher based on the fieldwork (2018)

As demonstrated in Figure 5.2, some HRM practices promote sense of POS and this, in turn, fosters individual knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels. Although this finding is similar to previous studies undertaken with knowledge intensive companies (Kim and Ko, 2014; Liu and Liu, 2011), there is a different range of HRM practices promoting POS adopted in knowledge intensive companies and labour-intensive companies specifically the SME boutique hotel sector. The evidence shows that all the case study hotels employ functional flexibility in their HRM practices, such as selecting multitasking people, job rotation within departments and multiple roles. These practices provide employees evidence that an organization supports them to gain personal benefits, such as career progression

and work life balance. This sense of POS benefits in turn, encourage individual knowledge sharing behaviour. On the other hand, knowledge intensive companies typically employ high-performance HRM practices to enhance the personal self-efficacy and sense of responsibility or accomplishment (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011) Once employees perceive these HRM practices supporting them to exhibit higher performance, they become engaged with knowledge sharing behaviour (Foss et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2011).

There is strong evidence that all the case studies actively foster departmental knowledge sharing behaviour. The evidence shows that Thai family culture is adopted by HODs in the recruitment and selection processes, communication, collaboration and feedback of each other within departments. These HRM practices help establish social capital elements necessary for team knowledge sharing behaviour, such as close relationships and a sense of community with the shared language. These practices, combined with opportunities to share and sense of POS generated from functional flexibility in HRM practice, encourage employees to share their knowledge within departments without concern for issues of trust. These findings offer distinctive insights on the literature conducted with knowledge intensive organizations. The previous studies indicate that high-commitment HRM build trust and trust is found to significantly influences team knowledge sharing behaviour (Wu and Lee, 2016; Casimir et al., 2012; Jimenez and Valle, 2013).

It appears that Thai family- oriented relationship and functional flexibility in HRM are mainly implemented by HODs within their department. As a result, employees are engaged with intra-departmental knowledge sharing behaviour rather than across the entire organization and, therefore, knowledge tends to be confined within them rather than sharing between them. However, it is evident that the Aster and Daisy have HRM practices associated with FTFC both formally and informally and these practices are held by HRM managers or senior managers to use with the entire organization. As a consequence, these hotels provide more opportunities for knowledge to be shared throughout the organization than the other case study hotels. However, employees might choose to ignore these opportunities if they



perceive they are not important or influential within the organization (as noted in the Yellow).

The evidence from the Aster shows it is a very distinctive case, which uses effective communication to build employees' sense of belonging with shared goals. This, in turn, reinforces organizational knowledge sharing behaviour on a voluntary basis. The employees of Aster voluntarily share their knowledge across departments, even though they are not provided with opportunities for sharing. This is because they perceive their knowledge has some influence and could help the organization to achieve its goals. This perception is recognized as 'sense of belonging to an organization' (McMillan and Chavis, 1986, pp. 10) and is generated by effective communication across the entire organization. More importantly, the sense of value and belonging is not generated unless the employees perceive a family atmosphere within the hotel, and this comes from employing a Thai family culture in HRM activities and a soft HRM. From these findings, it is important to highlight that effective communication combined with a family-oriented relationship in HRM activities help establish social capital elements necessary for organizational knowledge sharing behaviour, namely sense of belonging to organization with shared goals and understandings.

#### **5.4 Chapter Summary**

The main aim of this chapter is to critically analyse and evaluate the evidence of the role of HRM practices in facilitating employee knowledge sharing behaviour. In order to accomplish this aim, the chapter has discussed the similarity of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour across five case study hotels. The evidence indicates that all the case study hotels are concerned with organizational resources. They apply a functional flexibility approach to workforce deployment. This is a distinctive finding that the SMEs boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand in this study facilitate knowledge sharing by using functional flexibility approaches to HRM practice and employees perceive this approach as helping them to achieve personal benefit and encouraging them to share their knowledge.

The SME boutique hotels in this study exhibit a strong commitment to building a family-like working environment by adopting Thai family relationships as part of their HRM practices. This helps build a close relationship and sense of belonging with a shared language and understanding and this, in turn, fosters knowledge sharing behaviour. The chapter compares and discusses the differences in HRM practices associated with knowledge sharing behaviour between the five case study hotels. The evidence emphasizes that a sense of belonging with a shared goal is a significant social capital factor in encouraging knowledge sharing within boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand. This sense of belonging comes from the HRM practice associated with effective FTFC combined with Thai family culture in HRM activities. This finding differentiates this thesis from previous studies (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011) undertaken within knowledge intensive companies which suggest that trust significantly influences knowledge sharing behaviour (Wu and Lee, 2016; Casimir et al., 2012; Jimenez and Valle, 2013).

This chapter also develops empirical frameworks of the role of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour (Figure 5.1 and 5.2), which is appropriate for the SME boutique hotel sector. However, it may not be appropriate for organizations where the social setting is not informed by a highly collective culture. As part of analysing and discussing the research findings, the chapter clarifies the preceding findings which provide a link to the conclusion and the research's contribution to knowledge, which is covered in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

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The aim of this study is to understand the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai. To achieve this aim, the researcher critically examined previous studies, conducted fieldwork, analysed and discussed the fieldwork findings. This chapter presents the conclusion of the study. It begins by demonstrating how the aim and objectives have been achieved. The original contribution and the limitations of the study are identified and this leads to the recommendations. This chapter concludes by reflecting on the research journey undertaken to complete the thesis.

### 6.1 Achieving the Research Aim and Objectives

A number of studies investigate the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in knowledge-intensive companies and emphasize HRM in influencing interpersonal knowledge sharing factors (Lin, 2007; Aliakbar, 2012; Wee, 2012; Abdul-Jalal et al., 2013; Connell et al., 2014) and potentially building the social capital elements for sharing (Aklamanu et al., 2016; Pervaiz et al., 2016; Collins and Smith, 2006; Iqbal et al., 2013). However, knowledge of how HRM fosters knowledge sharing in labour-intensive companies, particularly boutique hotels, is limited. Therefore, this study explores the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels. In order to accomplish this aim, five objectives have been identified.

**Objective 1:** To critically review the literature on key concepts and theories of knowledge sharing behaviour and generic HRM practices, making specific reference to knowledge sharing behaviour and HRM in the hotel sector.

This objective is accomplished in Chapter 2: Literature Review. Knowledge sharing within organizations is recognized as one of the most valuable practices that allows organizations to achieve competitive advantage (Lin, 2007; Kim et al., 2015; Razak et al., 2016) and the foundations of HRM practices are to facilitate employees' abilities, motivations and opportunities to perform as the organization expects (Boxall and Purcell, 2011). It is assumed that facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour can be developed by HRM practices. Therefore, Chapter 2 explores the

literature in order to understand how HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization. It explores the definitions of knowledge and knowledge sharing behaviour, identifies factors of knowledge sharing behaviour and clarifies the different knowledge sharing behaviours and practices at different levels of organizational hierarchies. The chapter evaluates, in-depth, the role of HRM practices in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. The analysis of the literature enhances our understanding of the role of HRM in fostering interpersonal factors of individual knowledge sharing behaviour (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Aklamanu et al., 2016; Foss et al., 2009) and how it helps build the social capital element of knowledge sharing at team and organizational level (Llopis-Corcoles, 2011; Casimir et al., 2012; Mueller, 2012). It appears that the majority of the existing literature (see Table 2.3 in Chapter 2) has been undertaken with knowledge-intensive companies which have awareness of the importance of knowledge sharing. Therefore, the chapter explores the literature with specific reference to the hotel sector. It discusses the importance of knowledge sharing behaviour and its connection to hotel performance. The factors associated with knowledge sharing behaviour as well as the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel industry are clarified. As part of this evaluation, research gaps have emerged which identify the need for investigation of SME boutique hotels and the value of a multilevel approach to the exploration of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour.

**Objective 2:** To develop a conceptual framework through which to understand HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique hotels.

This objective is accomplished in Chapter 2: Literature Review. The evaluation of previous literature indicates that both the generic and specific hotel literature based on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour are dominated by the investigation of a single level of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour, particularly at organizational level (Mat et al., 2016; Bouncken, 2002; Lowe, 2002; Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2017; Knox and Walsh, 2005). In fact, knowledge sharing is hierarchical and interdependent with individual, departmental and organizational levels (Wang and Noe, 2010; Lee et al., 2015; Boh and Wong, 2013; Llopis and Foss,

2016). Knowledge sharing within organizations is a type of social interaction between varying levels of social actors within organizational hierarchies with different perceptions and values of HRM (Wright and Nishii, 2007). Therefore, investigating a single level of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour is limited (Sander et al., 2014) and does not provide a clear or complete view of how HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization (Renkema et al., 2016). In order to gain a better understanding and a more nuanced explanation of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour, multilevel relationships of HRM and organizational knowledge-based performance is adopted from Minbaeva (2013) in order to develop a conceptual framework for this study, as shown in Figure 2.3. The conceptual framework is used as a guideline for the data collection.

**Objective 3:** To explore HRM and knowledge sharing practices and the behaviour of boutique hotel employees, managers and/or owners through qualitative research in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

This objective is accomplished in Chapter 3: Research Methodology. The researcher considers herself an interpretivist and views HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour as subjective, socially constructed activities based on the interactions between people at various levels of organizational hierarchies (Wang and Noe, 2010). As a consequence of the subjectivity of the research philosophy and interpretivist stance, inductive qualitative research has been used to explore the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in Thai boutique hotels. Furthermore, since a single level of investigation has shown inadequate evidence to explain a complete view of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour across an organization, an in-depth organizational study involving multilevel investigation is needed (Klein and Kozlowski, 2000) and a case study design, which is recognized as an appropriate methodology to explore the multilevel relationships and processes of organizational phenomenon (Renkema et al., 2016) is employed.

Primary data collection was undertaken from March to June, 2016. To ensure research quality, the data collected was determined, guided by the conceptual framework to investigate the multilevel knowledge sharing taking place (Figures

2.3 and 2.4). The study employed the case selection strategy of Stake (2006), selecting a multiple case study design. Five boutique hotels in Chiang Mai city, Thailand participated in this study. Three data collection methods were employed: 40 face-to-face semi-structured interviews with staff working at various levels of organizations, 20 non-participant observations (in public places), and documentation. This allowed the researcher to collate all the required data and search for convergence among the information to form the themes of the study.

**Objective 4:** To critically analyse and evaluate the multilevel evidence of the role of HRM practices in facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour in relation to the conceptual framework.

This objective is accomplished in Chapter 4: Findings. To achieve this objective, two stages of data analysis have been employed, individual case study analysis and cross-case analysis. Individual case study analysis allowed the researcher to learn the complexity and situational uniqueness of each case. The researcher reviewed all the data gathered from the fieldwork, including interview transcriptions, observation notes, memos, and other documentation. Some keywords, phrases and sentences related to the terms HRM and knowledge sharing were highlighted (see Figure 4.1). The researcher developed a sense of the overall data which helped establish ideas for the initial coding. The codes were categorized under the themes of HRM and knowledge sharing. Each theme was classified into three levels of analysis: organizational, departmental and operative (see Figure 4.3). Finally, the two sets of data, HRM practice at various levels of the organizational hierarchies and patterns of knowledge sharing practice, were combined into one table. The range of HRM practices involved in facilitating knowledge sharing were identified and this enhanced the understanding of how and why employees share their knowledge along with the patterns of knowledge sharing (see Table 4.5). The researcher replicated these processes of data analysis for all five case studies.

The findings from each case study became the data for the cross-case analysis comparing the themes which emerged from the analysis of the case studies. The similarities and differences across the five case studies emerged. The similarities of

the five case studies generated rigour for the results and generalized the role of HRM practices in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in Thai Boutique hotels.

**Objective 5:** To make an academic contribution to knowledge in the field of HRM and knowledge-sharing practices in SME boutique hotels.

This objective is accomplished in Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis. To make an academic contribution, Chapter 5 discusses the critical analysis of the findings (from Chapter 4) in line with previous literature and the conceptual framework. Two empirical frameworks for the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels have been developed.

The first empirical framework identifies the similarities in the role of HRM in facilitating knowledge sharing behaviour across the five case studies (Figure 5.1). All of the case studies use functional flexibility and family-oriented relationships in HRM. These practices promote a sense of POS and establish social capital elements, namely a sense of community within teams/departments and these, in turn, foster employees to engage with intra-departmental knowledge sharing without concern for issues of trust. These findings offer the distinctive role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in labour intensive organizations such as SME boutique hotels and knowledge intensive organizations (Wu and Lee, 2016; Casimir et al., 2012; Jimenez and Valle, 2013).

The second framework demonstrates the effectiveness of HRM practices combined with a family-oriented relationship in HRM help establish social capital elements necessary for organizational knowledge sharing behaviour, namely a sense of belonging in organizations with shared goals and understandings (Figure 5.2). These findings support the idea that the incentive of socialization and the perception of being part of a community significantly influences knowledge sharing behaviour in operating adhocracy companies, such as hotel operations (Lam and Lambermont-Ford, 2010; Boella and Goss-Turner, 2013; O'Fallon and Rutherford, 2011). This finding differentiates the current study from literature undertaken within knowledge intensive company, such as engineering consultancy (Mueller;

2012), which indicates that social trust, aspects of job orientation and shared roles of the team leaders found to promote knowledge sharing behaviour. However, both of empirical frameworks are specific to SME boutique hotels in Thailand which have high interdependence and a social setting informed by a highly collective culture, which may not be appropriate for organizations in social settings that are more individualistic in some cultural dynamics. The next section discusses the research contribution.

## **6.2 Research Contribution**

This study undertakes qualitative multilevel research and deliberately focuses on SME boutique hotels in Thailand. To the researcher's knowledge, this study is among the first qualitative empirical works investigating multilevel HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour. It is the first in the context of SME boutique hotels, and certainly the first in Thailand. The discovery of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in Thai boutique hotels in this study leads to two contributions of this research to this field, a theoretical contribution and a methodological contribution.

### **6.2.1 Theoretical Contribution**

Previous investigations of how HRM fosters knowledge sharing have been undertaken in knowledge-intensive companies (see Table 2.3). This has advanced our understanding of the role of HRM in influencing interpersonal or psychological knowledge sharing factors (Lin, 2007; Aliakbar, 2012, Wee, 2012; Abdul-Jalal et al., 2013; Connell et al., 2014) and also, potentially, the role of HRM in establishing the social capital elements of sharing, particularly social trust (Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005; Wu et al., 2007; Aklamanu et al., 2016). These studies show that social capital and climate are supplementary to knowledge sharing and that interpersonal and intrinsic motivations (such as reputation) are significant factors for knowledge sharing in knowledge intensive companies. This study focuses on SME boutique hotels and the findings broaden the knowledge of HRM and knowledge sharing outside knowledge intensive companies.



Firstly, previous literature (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011; Foss et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2011; Kim and Lee, 2013; Cabrera and Cabrera, 2005) indicates that high-performance HRM practices, such as selective staffing, comprehensive training and development, fair feedback, job autonomy and task identity, provide employees with perceived organizational support (POS) which encourages them to improve their performance. This POS, in turn, fosters employee's willingness to share their knowledge. The current study adds that the adoption of functional flexibility in HRM practice also facilitates knowledge sharing behaviour in boutique SMEs in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The evidence from all the case studies shows that they use a functional flexibility approach to shape their HRM practices, such as selecting multitasking people, job rotation within departments and multiple roles. Employees perceive this approach as helping them gain personal benefit by improving their knowledge and skills for career progression and work life balance. This encourages them to share their knowledge.

Secondly, the existing knowledge on the role of HRM in fostering team knowledge sharing behaviour suggests that high-commitment HRM builds social trust, and trust facilitates and encourages team knowledge sharing behaviour. This knowledge has been generated from investigations conducted with knowledge-intensive companies, where knowledge is value and power (Collins and Smith, 2006; Chiang and Chuang, 2011). Employees in knowledge-intensive companies typically perceive knowledge as power and employees may risk losing their power if they share their knowledge. Therefore, trust significantly influences their knowledge sharing behaviour (Wu and Lee, 2016; Casimir et al., 2012; Jimenez and Valle, 2013). The current study explores knowledge sharing behaviour from the perspective of a very different sector, SME hotels. In doing so, this study contributes the different role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in the SME boutique hotel sector. SME boutique hotels in Chiang Mai exhibit a strong commitment to building family-like working environments by adopting Thai family relationships in their HRM practices. This approach promotes a close relationship and sense of belonging with a shared language and understanding and, in turn, this fosters knowledge sharing behaviour, particularly within departments. The

employees of SME boutique hotels do not discuss social trust when sharing knowledge, because they have a low sense of competitiveness. On the other hand, they have a strong feeling of community or team, which comes from the adoption of Thai family-oriented relationships in HRM practices.

Thirdly, there are some case study hotels which clearly focus on using HRM practices associated with effective FTFC and Thai family culture. These HRM approaches not only provide wider opportunities for knowledge sharing (both horizontally and vertically) but also establish a sense of belonging with shared goals across the entire organization. This encourages all participants at all levels of organizational hierarchies to share knowledge across and throughout organizations. This finding emphasizes the idea that a sense of belonging with shared goals and understanding is a significant factor which encourages knowledge sharing behaviour in Thai SME boutique hotels, and this comes from the Thai family culture generated by HRM activities. Therefore, a sophisticated or collective HRM practices (Donate et al., 2016; Iqbal, 2015) may not be an appropriate HRM approach to fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels. Rather, a soft HRM approach related to cultural management can play a crucial role in establishing a sense of belonging to an organization that promotes knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels. More importantly, when a soft HRM approach related to cultural management is used with FTFC, it promotes social capital elements, such as sense of belonging with shared goals and understanding. This encourages a strong commitment to promoting knowledge sharing behaviour across the entire organization in order to enhance the quality of service and develop competitive advantage.

### **6.2.2 Methodological Contribution**

There are two methodological contributions which emerge from this study, multilevel research and a qualitative approach to multilevel research. Firstly, the existing knowledge of HRM fostering knowledge sharing has predominantly been generated from research undertaken at a single level of HRM, and knowledge sharing behaviour at either an individual, team or organizational level, with data

collected from only one level of organizational actors, either employees (Foss et al., 2009; Kim and Ko, 2014), or leaders and managers (Fong et al., 2011; Chuang et al., 2016). However, HRM and knowledge sharing within organizations is a social interaction between varying levels of social actors within organizational hierarchies (Wang and Noe, 2010; Lee et al., 2015; Boh and Wong, 2013; Llopis and Foss, 2016). Social actors from different levels of organizational hierarchies have different perceptions and values (Wright and Nishii, 2007) and share knowledge differently (Yang, 2004, 2009). Undertaking a single level of investigation is thus limited (Sander et al., 2014) and is inadequate to fully understand how HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour across organizations. The evaluation of literature suggests a multilevel research approach is valued for the exploration of the relationship between HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour.

This study applies a multilevel research approach involving multiple levels of participant from the organizations (the owners or managers, HODs and employees). It analyses the data at various levels (operational, departmental and organizational). The multilevel approach helps the researcher collate information and data from multiple viewpoints. This improves the validity and reliability of the research and more clearly identifies of the role of HRM practices in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour at individual, departmental and organizational level. The multilevel approach helps this study identify knowledge sharing behaviour in different contexts, such as individual or collective, departments or organizations, and horizontally or vertically. There are some sites where knowledge sharing behaviour is strong, for example within departments, but it is harder to share knowledge between departments or across the entire organization. Behaviours are facilitated by a range of HRM practices (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). As a result, multilevel research is considered more appropriate for investigating the complex and hierarchical phenomena.

Secondly, previous studies (Wu and Lee, 2016; Pervaiz et al., 2016) adopting a multilevel approach involving multiple participants are dominated by deductive quantitative research and the aggregation of results. Such approaches are limited in terms of construct validity and may generate invalid or unreliable findings

(Kozlowski and Klein, 2000). Since the researcher views HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour as subjective, an inductive qualitative approach to data collection and analysis brings new insight to the true meaning of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization (Gray, 2014).

This study employs a qualitative research method, including semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and documentation, collecting evidence of HRM fostering knowledge sharing behaviour at various levels of organizational hierarchies. The researcher collected all the required data and other information and searched for convergence among the information to form the themes of the study. This addresses a construct validity issue of deductive quantitative multilevel research found in previous studies, and enhances the quality of the current study (Creswell, 2007). As a consequence of undertaking qualitative multilevel research, the study analyses data from social actors at different levels. The findings are not based only on managers' views but include the ways HODs and individuals recognize and value practices, which facilitate knowledge sharing behaviour. This means the findings are informed by multiple views of respondents who create, implement and perceive HRM practices. The findings from the various levels of analysis, although mostly different, show some similarities. These similar findings provide the strength of the results, because the common patterns that emerge at each level of analysis are of particular interest and value in capturing the core role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. In addition, this research approach allows the researcher to contribute new knowledge in the area of HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour. This study identifies how certain factors within HRM practices are significant, including the development of a family-oriented relationships, functional flexibility and effective FTFC in HRM practices. This shows that a qualitative multilevel research approach helps enhance the validity and reliability of the current study. It also helps address the limitation of existing literature, which has mainly undertaken a quantitative and a single level of investigation. Investigating a single level may reveal biased findings (Makela et al., 2014) or not provide a clear and complete view of how HRM can foster knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization (Renkema et al., 2016). Therefore, a

qualitative multilevel research approach is appropriate for exploring hierarchical phenomena such HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour within an organization.

### **6.3 Research Limitations and Recommendations**

There are a number of research limitations of this study, and these should be taken into account when considering the findings and contributions. The first limitation is associated with the scope of the research. Previous literature (Donate et al., 2016; Bouncken, 2002) highlights the advancement of knowledge sharing behaviour in the hotel sector allowing organizations to achieve competitive advantage with regards to quality of service. In a belief that hotel organizations enhance quality of service and achieve competitive advantage by encouraging knowledge sharing behaviour, this current study focuses on examining the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour. The findings indicate that a soft HRM approach related to cultural management plays a crucial role in establishing a sense of belonging with the shared goals and vision necessary for knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels. Some case study hotels, which are concerned with the enhancement of service quality, are more likely to use effective FTFC in HRM practices, and this strongly promotes knowledge sharing behaviour across the entire organization. However, there is insufficient evidence from those case studies to manufacture the link between knowledge sharing and delivering a high quality of service, as this is not within the original scope of the research. The researcher recognizes the limitations of this study and suggest further study to examine whether, and how, knowledge sharing behaviour works in enhancing quality of service in SME boutique hotels.

An interesting finding emerges from this study which does not fall within the original scope of the research. The study finds that workforce diversity is a barrier to knowledge sharing in boutique hotels in Chiang Mai. Thailand is a member of the Asian Economic Community (AEC) which allows the free flow of labour across countries. Thailand is considered the most attractive country for hotel and tourism industry workers, and skilled workers from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, with a good command of English, seek job opportunities in Thailand. Hotel owners

are likely to hire these migrant staff to work in positions involving communication in English and hire unskilled labour, at low wages, from Burma and Laos (ASEAN Briefing, 2016). This practice of hiring multinational workers in the hotel sector leads to barriers to knowledge sharing behaviour, and research is needed into how to overcome this challenge.

The second limitation is associated with the generalizability of case study research. To ensure research quality and generalizability, a multiple case study design and multilevel research approach are employed. This study is conducted with five case study hotels located in Chiang Mai city, Thailand, with data and information collected from multilevel social actors within organizational hierarchies. Moreover, this study replicated the processes of data analysis with all five case studies. This method is beneficial because it effectively ensures a richness of data and enhances rigour and the quality of results (Yin, 2014). However, the results may be difficult to generalize or extend to represent all Thai boutique hotels as a sector, because this study was conducted only in Chiang Mai and does not cover the wider hotel sector and population across Thailand, which may have different sub-cultures across the regions (TAT, 2014). The researcher recognizes the limitations of this study regarding generalization of the results. Further research needs to be conducted across all four regions of Thailand. However, it is difficult to conduct qualitative research with wider samples, and therefore quantitative research may be more appropriate. Creswell and Plano (2011) suggest a mixed research method. The findings from this current study could be used to develop appropriate quantitative instruments (survey and questionnaire) to examine wider samples of SME boutique hotels across Thailand. This would provide more specific measures and statistical analysis to establish a quality of research. The results could be generalized to show the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing in SME boutique hotels in Thailand.

#### **6.4 Research Journey**

The researcher started her PhD journey with curiosity about how SME boutique hotels can sustain competitive advantage through HRM. After spending eight months reading and reviewing the literature, the researcher identified the

importance of knowledge sharing behaviour in achieving and maintaining competitive advantage in the boutique hotel sector. However, the knowledge about how this sector employs HRM to encourage knowledge sharing is limited. Therefore, the researcher focused her research on HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels, and the research enlightened the researcher's view of the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in the SME boutique hotel sector. After this research, the researcher recognized that Thai culture is a significant influential factor in managing people in SME boutique hotels which are likely to be in collectivist social settings. The Thai culture in HRM practice builds a sense of belonging with shared goals and understanding and this, in turn, encourages people to share their knowledge with each other.

The researcher, whose background and research experience are based in Thailand and other Asian settings, found the language, research process and system to be barriers to doing a PhD in the UK. The researcher took some months to adjust to the UK educational environment, attending several research training sessions such as research methodology, writing up a PhD and time management for PhD students. The researcher worked very hard to improve her academic language by attending all academic English for postgraduate sessions provided by her university and taking a private course with an English professional. Furthermore, the researcher attended international conferences associated with her research field, which helped increase her understanding of the international research process. All of these experiences shaped her.

To conclude this thesis, the researcher appreciates the patience and effort that is put into this long journey, and is very proud to be able to contribute to knowledge in this field. The knowledge and experiences gained from this journey are very significant and beneficial. It has prepared the researcher for her future career as a university lecturer, since the university which funds the study is in need of lecturers in this field. The researcher is confident that she is able to undertake research, globally, in the hospitality field.

## 6.5 Chapter Summary

This section presents the conclusion of the study. The study has explored the role of HRM in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels in Chiang Mai, Thailand, through qualitative multilevel research. Five research objectives have been developed and this chapter demonstrates how the aim and objectives have been achieved.

The chapter clarifies the research contributions, including the theoretical and methodological contributions. The study broadens the knowledge of HRM and knowledge sharing outside of knowledge-intensive companies in three main ways: 1) apart from high-performance HRM practices, functional flexibility in HRM practice also provides employees evidence of organizational support to gain personal benefits, and this encourages them to share their knowledge individually; 2) a soft HRM approach related to (Thai) family friendly culture plays a crucial role in establishing a sense of belonging with shared goals and vision, and this promotes departmental knowledge sharing behaviour; and 3) a soft HRM approach combined with FTFC facilitates knowledge sharing behaviour across entire organizations, and this may enhance the quality of service and develop competitive advantage. The study finds that multilevel research and a qualitative approach to multilevel research are appropriate for exploration of such hierarchical phenomena within organizations, such as HRM and knowledge sharing behaviour.

The chapter indicates the limitations and gives recommendations. The limitations are associated with the scope of the research and the generalizability of case study research results. The chapter identifies an interesting finding that is not within the original scope of the research and recommends further study. The chapter ends with a reflection on the research journey undertaken to complete the thesis.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: The interview schedules and questions

#### For General Manager or owner

Main Questions	Additional questions	Clarifying questions
Opening question: Could you please tell me a little about yourself and the overall scope of your work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How long have you been working in the hotel industry and with this hotel?</li> <li>- Do you have any qualifications?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
'Please tell me about how you support your employees to learn to deliver high quality customer service	<p>How do you do ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selection</li> <li>- Orientation</li> <li>- Training</li> <li>- Compensation and reward</li> <li>- Communication / interaction</li> <li>- Performance appraisal systems</li> <li>- Technology</li> <li>- Physical element</li> </ul> <p>Are there any barriers or problems of those practices?</p> <p>How can you deal with those problems?</p> <p>How would your employees respond on these practices?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
How do you share your knowledge (information, skills, and experience) within your organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With whom?</li> <li>- What knowledge?</li> <li>- When and where do you share?</li> <li>- Why? and why Not ?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
Do you have anything else you would like to share with me regarding what you have done to support your employees to learn and share their knowledge and experiences?		

## For Head of hotel departments

Main Questions	Additional questions	Clarifying questions
Opening question: Could you please tell me a little about yourself and the overall scope of your work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How long have you been working in the hotel industry and with this hotel?</li> <li>- Do you have any qualifications?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
'Please tell me about how you support your employees to learn to deliver high quality customer service	<p>How do you do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selection</li> <li>- Orientation</li> <li>- Training</li> <li>- Compensation and reward</li> <li>- Communication / interaction</li> <li>- Performance appraisal systems</li> <li>- Technology</li> <li>- Physical element</li> </ul> <p>Are there any barriers or problems of those practices?</p> <p>How can you deal with those problems?</p> <p>How would your employees respond on these practices?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
How do you share your knowledge (information, skills, and experience) within your organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With whom?</li> <li>- What knowledge?</li> <li>- When and where do you share?</li> <li>- Why? and why Not ?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
All practices you have told me, are they hotel's strategies or your ideas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Which practices are the hotel's, which one is yours?</li> </ul> <p>If they are hotel strategies,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can you employ?</li> <li>- Is it easy or difficult to do it?</li> </ul> <p>If they are yours,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can you do that?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
Do you have anything else you would like to share with me regarding what you have done to support your employees to learn and share their knowledge and experiences?		

## For operational employees

Main Questions	Additional questions	Clarifying questions
Opening question: Could you please tell me a little about yourself and the overall scope of your work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How long have you been working in the hotel industry and with this hotel?</li> <li>- Do you have any qualifications?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
Could you please tell me your story of working here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selection</li> <li>- Orientation</li> <li>- Training</li> <li>- Compensation and reward</li> <li>- Communication / interaction</li> <li>- Performance appraisal systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
Please tell me the best example of customer service you have ever delivered since you have been working here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How have you <b>learnt</b> the way to deliver high quality customer services?</li> <li>- In what way (asking/ experiencing/ be trained?)</li> <li>- Where/ from whom?</li> <li>- Is it easy or difficult to do?</li> <li>- Who helps or guides you?</li> <li>- How the management help / support you?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
Have you ever told anyone else (colleague / supervisor/ manager) about this incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why</li> <li>- With whom</li> <li>- What was their response?</li> <li>- When did you share?</li> <li>- Where did you share?</li> <li>- Was that easy or difficult to do? How?</li> <li>- What are the barriers to sharing experiences?</li> <li>- How the management supports you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can you expand a little on this?</li> <li>- Can you give me some examples?</li> <li>- Can you be more specific</li> </ul>
Do you have any suggestions for the hotel in order to support your work and the delivery of high quality customer services?		

## Appendix 2: Observation schedule and Memo

### Observation schedule for hotel managers and heads of department

Area	Extent to which hotel encourages employees to share their knowledge or experience
<b>When</b> <b>/Where</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting</li> <li>- Morning briefing</li> <li>- On the operation such as hotel lobby, restaurant, and all hotel functions (If possible)</li> <li>- Shift hand-overs</li> <li>- Induction day</li> <li>- Training events</li> <li>- etc.</li> </ul>
<b>what</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When do they share or communicate?</li> <li>- Who are they?</li> <li>- What are they talking / discussing about?</li> <li>- Which communication channels are used?</li> <li>- How do they respond to each other?</li> </ul>

### Observation schedule for employees

Area	Extent to which employees share their knowledge or experience ( Knowledge sharing behaviour)
<b>When/</b> <b>Where</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delivering service at front of the house area such as hotel lobby, restaurant, and all hotel functions (If possible)</li> <li>- During brake times at back of the house area such as staff canteen, locker room</li> </ul>
<b>What</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When do they share or communicate?</li> <li>- Who are they?</li> <li>- What are they talking / discussing about?</li> <li>- Which communication channels are used?</li> <li>- How do they respond to each other?</li> </ul>

### Appendix 3: The relevant HRM documentation

HRM	Document
<b>Resourcing</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Job design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hotel's value/ vision statement</li> <li>- Job specifications</li> <li>- Job descriptions</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Recruitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recruitment policy</li> <li>- Internal and external advertisement</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interview plan</li> <li>- Selection interview appraisal report</li> <li>- Attainment tests</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Induction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Induction checklist</li> <li>- Induction documentation</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>HR development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Performance management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Performance appraisal form</li> <li>- Performance report</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training program/ plans</li> <li>- Training schedules</li> <li>- Training records</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Reward and remuneration</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reward system</li> <li>- Incentive scheme</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Job evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Job evaluation lists/ form</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Relationships</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employee relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employee leaving reasons</li> <li>- Employee consultative committee constitution</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. HR planning and policy</li> <li>3. Productivity and labour costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Productivity measures</li> <li>- Employee's work schedule</li> <li>- Work quota</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

**Remark:** The lists of documentation is a full option of HRM' documentation collated from academic literature (e.g. Nickson, 2013). You have right in providing researcher as many items as you are convenient

## Appendix 4: Invitation Letter



Oxford School of Hospitality Management  
Oxford Brookes University  
Oxford OX3 0BP, United Kingdom

..... March, 2016

### Topic Research participation invitation

To **Hotel Owner/ General Manager/ HR manager ( Name of Boutique hotel)**

I, Miss Niramol Promnil, a PhD student in hospitality management at Oxford school of hospitality, Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom, conduct the research under the topic of 'The role of Human resource management (HRM) practices in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in SME boutique hotels'. This research involves building case studies of HRM and knowledge sharing practices in boutique hotels, which requires participation of human resources from operative throughout executive / owner level to fully understand knowledge practices and behaviour. As your hotel is one of the most popular hotels and won prestigious awards for the best service hotels, your participation is sought. Therefore, your hotel is important in this study and is invited to be a participant representing one of the best Thai boutique hotels in Chiang Mai.

This research is funded by University of Phayao, Thailand, and is a part of Ph.D. studies in hospitality management of the Oxford School of Hospitality Management. The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University. If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, you are pleased to contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on [ethics@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@brookes.ac.uk).

For any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact to me via telephone number xxx-xxxxxxx or [14105339@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:14105339@brookes.ac.uk). I am looking forward to hearing from you. Thank you very much in advance for your kind consideration.

Miss Niramol Promnil

PhD student



**Appendix 5: The permission form**



**Permission Form**

**Research student** : Miss Niramol Promnil

**Research title** : The role of HRM practices in fostering knowledge sharing behaviour in Thai boutique hotels

**Name of hotel** : .....

**Location** : Chiang Mai province, Thailand

**Levels of access agree:**

**Please initial box**

1. The relevant Human resource management's documentation

Yes

No

2. Non- participant observation in front and back of the house operations.

3. Face- to face interview with Human resource manager or hotel manager, heads of departments, and operational employees.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Appendix 6: The Consent form



### CONSENT FORM (Interview)

**Research title:**

'The role of HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour in Thai boutique hotels'

**Research student:** Miss Niramol Promnil

**Contact information:**

Oxford School of Hospitality Management  
Faculty of Business, Oxford Brookes University  
Headington Campus, Oxford OX3 0BP, United Kingdom  
Mobile : UK: +44(0)7478300588  
Thailand: +66(0)891809178  
E-mail : 14105339@brookes.ac.uk

**Please initial box**

- |                                                                                                                                                              | Yes                      | No                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.                                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I agree to take part in the above study.                                                                                                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded                                                                                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications                                                                                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Appendix 7: A table of participants' information**

Codes	Case study	Levels	Job title	Gender/ Age	Educations	Experience	Tenure	Ref.
SF1	Sunflower	Organization	General manager/ HRM manager	M/40	BBA – management	Local hotel ( 10 Ys)	3 Ys	Owner
SU1	Sunflower	Department	Front office manager	M/42	N/A	Thai hotel ( 12 Ys)	2 Ys	Friends
SU2	Sunflower	Department	Food and beverage	M/35	N/A	Local restaurant(10Ys)	5 (Ys)	Owner
SO1	Sunflower	Operation	Waitress	F/25	BBA- hotel	None	2 (Ys)	Friends
SO2	Sunflower	Operation	Waitress	F/25	BBA- hotel	None	2 (Ys)	Friends
SO3	Sunflower	Operation	Guest service assistance	F/29	BA- English	Local hotel ( 2 Ys)	3 (Ys)	Website
DF1	Daisy	Organization	General manager	M/43	BA- hotel ( USA)	MNC hotel (>20 Ys)	4Ms	Owner
DF2	Daisy	Organization	Human resource manager	F/46	N/A	Local hotel (>15 Ys)	6Ms	Website
DU1	Daisy	Department	Front office manager	F/29	BA hotel	MNC hotel (>8 Ys)	2 Ms	Website
DU2	Daisy	Department	Head of engineering	M/44	BE ( Engineer)	MNC hotel (>9 Ys)	10 Ms	Website
DU3	Daisy	Department	Food and beverage manager	M/39	N/A	MNC hotel(>13 Ys)	6 Ms	Walk-in
DU4	Daisy	Department	Financial and accounting manager	F/47	BBA Accounting	N/A	7 Ys	Friend
DU5	Daisy	Department	Head chef	M/35	BBA management	MNC hotel (>15 Ys)	7 Ms	Owner
DU6	Daisy	Department	Housekeeping manager	F/43	Oriental Hotel school	MNC hotel (16 Ys)	7 Ms	Website
DO1	Daisy	Operation	Guest service assistance(Girl)	F/24	BA – history	Local hotel (1 Y)	2 Ms	Website
DO2	Daisy	Operation	Guest service assistance(Boy)	M/24	BA- tourism	None	6 Ms	Friends ( GSA)
DO3	Daisy	Operation	Waitress(New)	F/24	BA- hotel	Internship in MNC hotel	5 Ms	Friends ( Waitress)
DO4	Daisy	Operation	Waitress(senior)	F/ 27	N/A	Local small restaurant	2 Ys	Family ( brother)
DO5	Daisy	Operation	Engineer	M/25	N/A	Local hotel (2 Ys)	2 Ys	Friend ( Engineer)
DO6	Daisy	Operation	Room attendant	F/34	N/A	Local hotel: Clark ( 4 Ys)	4 Ys	Former colleague

Codes	Case study	Levels	Job title	Gender/ Age	Educations	Experience	Tenure	Ref.
YF1	Yellow	Organization	Owner	M/ 35	MBA- Hotel management	None		His family business
YF2	Yellow	Organization	HHR manger and IT and storage	M/45	BSC : computer science	N/A	4 Ys	Owner
YU1	Yellow	Department	Front office manager	F/30	BBA- hotel management	5-star hotel ( 5Ys)	6 Ms	Website
YU2	Yellow	Department	Housekeeping manager	F/50	N/A	Hotel (30 Ys)	10 Ys	Owner
YO1	Yellow	Operation	Guest service assistance	F/25	BBA- tourism	None	4 Ys	Walk-in
YO2	Yellow	Operation	Waitress(new)	F/24	BBA hotel and tourism	5-star hotel ( 5 Ys)	7 Ms	Website
YO3	Yellow	Operation	Waitress(senior)	M/ 49	N/A	Local restaurant	10(Ys)	Owner
RF1	Rosemary	Organization	Administrator	F/40	N/A	N/A	11 (Ys)	owner
RU1	Rosemary	Department	Front office manager	F/29	BA – English	N/A	5(Ys)	Website
RU2	Rosemary	Department	Housekeeping manager	F/45	N/A	Local hotel ( 13 Ys)	9(Ys)	Friends
RO1	Rosemary	Operation	Guest service assistance	F/30	BA- English	Local hotel (5Ys)	3 (Ys)	Website
RO2	Rosemary	Operation	Room attendant	F/45	N/A	Local hotel (18 Ys)	9 (Ys)	Friends
RO3	Rosemary	Operation	Waiter	M/28	BA- English	Local hotel (6Ys)	2(Ys)	Friends
AF1	Aster	Organization	Human resource manager	F/ 41	N/A	Local boutique hotel(8Ys)	2(Ys)	Hotel network ( friend)
AU1	Aster	Department	Front office manager	F/42	N/A	Local boutique hotel(10Ys)	2(Ys)	Hotel network ( friend)
AU2	Aster	Department	Housekeeping manager	F/45	N/A	Hotel chain ( 12 Ys)	2(Ys)	website
AU3	Aster	Department	Food and beverage manager	M/ 37	BBA- hotel	Local boutique hotel(7Ys)	2(Ys)	Hotel network ( friend)
A01	Aster	Operation	Room attendant	F/25	BBA – hotel ( first honour)	MNC hotel ( 2 Ys)	2(Ys)	Website
A02	Aster	Operation	Waitress	F/ 26	BBA- hotel	MNC hotel ( 2 Ys)	2( Ys)	Friends
A03	Aster	Operation	Public area attendant	F/24	BSC- psychology	N/A	2 (Ys)	Walk-in

## Appendix 8: Letter of Approval



Mr David Bowie  
Director of Studies  
Oxford School of Hospitality Management  
Faculty of Business  
Oxford Brookes University  
Headington Campus

19 February 2016

Dear Mr Bowie

UREC Registration No: 160983  
The role of HRM practices and knowledge sharing behaviour in service quality improvements in Thai boutique hotels

Thank you for your email of 9 February 2016 outlining your response to the points raised in my previous letter about the PhD study of your research student Niramol Promnil and attaching the revised documents. I am pleased to inform you that, on this basis, I have given Chair's Approval for the study to begin.

The UREC approval period for this study is two years from the date of this letter, so 19 February 2018. If you need the approval to be extended please do contact me nearer the time of expiry.

Should the recruitment, methodology or data storage change from your original plans, or should any study participants experience adverse physical, psychological, social, legal or economic effects from the research, please inform me with full details as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S Quinton".

Dr Sarah Quinton  
Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee

cc Judie Gannon, Second Supervisor  
Niramol Promnil, Research Student  
Jill Organ, Research Degrees Team  
Louise Wood, UREC Administrator



[www.brookes.ac.uk](http://www.brookes.ac.uk)