

INVESTIGATING THE MODERATING ROLE OF HR PRACTICES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY AND READINESS DURING THE PRE-OPENING PHASE IN SRI LANKA'S HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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This study examines the moderating effect of human resource (HR) practices on the relationship between employee creativity and readiness during the pre-opening phase of Sri Lanka's hospitality sector. The research addresses a critical gap by analyzing how HR practices - specifically training, communication, feedback, and role clarity - enhance employee creativity and facilitate readiness in the high-pressure pre-opening context.

A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire distributed among employees with prior pre-opening experience at leading hotels, including Cinnamon Life Integrated Resort, Shangri-La, and ITC Ratnadipa. A total of 346 valid responses were subjected to descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and moderation analysis using SPSS. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between employee creativity and readiness, further strengthened by HR practices. Training and communication emerged as the primary enablers of creativity, whereas feedback and role clarity were the strongest determinants of employee readiness.

These insights underscore the strategic importance of HR interventions in fostering a workforce capable of navigating the complexities of hotel pre-openings. The study contributes to the broader literature on HR management in hospitality and offers empirical evidence to inform HR strategies aimed at enhancing employee adaptability and performance. Future research should explore industry-specific best practices and the longitudinal effects of HR policies on workforce preparedness.

Keywords: *Employee Creativity, Employee Readiness, Human Resource Practices, Hospitality Management, Organizational Preparedness, Pre-Opening Phase, Quantitative Research, Training and Development, Sri Lanka*

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