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Year-Round vs. Seasonal Workforce: A Comparative Analysis of HR Strategies in the Gastronomy Industry

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Abstract

The article analyses differences in human resource management strategies between year-round and seasonal gastronomy businesses. The aim of the study is to identify key differences in recruitment, onboarding, motivation, remuneration, training, and employee relations. The research is based on a comparative case study of two gastronomic businesses. The results indicate that seasonal operations focus on flexibility and rapid recruitment, while year-round businesses prioritize employee development and stability. The findings highlight the importance of contingency-based HR models in gastronomy management.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Gastronomy Industry, Seasonal Employment, Year-Round Business, HR Strategy.

1. Introduction

The gastronomy sector is considered one of the most dynamic and labor-intensive branches of the economy. It is distinguished by a high level of employee turnover, variability in customer demand, and a strong dependence on seasonal factors. For this reason, human resource management (HRM) plays a crucial role in maintaining service quality, ensuring the continuity of operations, and supporting the long-term competitiveness of enterprises (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023, p. 9). In service-based organizations, employees have direct contact with customers, which means their performance significantly shapes customer satisfaction as well as the overall image and reputation of the brand. Consequently, well-designed HR practices constitute a key determinant of organizational success.

A particularly important challenge faced by many gastronomy businesses is seasonality. Numerous enterprises operate simultaneously within two distinct frameworks: year-round operations that provide stability and seasonal activities that generate intensive yet temporary income. These differing operational conditions require varied approaches to recruitment processes, employee onboarding, motivation systems, compensation policies, and staff relations strategies. Seasonal operations usually focus on flexibility, fast recruitment procedures, and short-term operational efficiency, whereas year-round businesses tend to prioritize workforce stability, employee development, and the strengthening of organizational culture.

From a theoretical standpoint, such differences may be interpreted through the perspective of contingency-based human resource management, which assumes that HR practices should be adapted to the specific organizational context and environmental conditions in which a company operates. Although the literature on HRM in service industries is relatively

extensive, empirical studies comparing HR strategies within the same organization that simultaneously operates under both seasonal and year-round models remain relatively limited. Conducting such analyses allows for a better understanding of how seasonality affects managerial decisions and the management of human resources.

Therefore, the objective of this article is to perform a comparative analysis of human resource management practices in the gastronomic enterprise “LUKRUM II Wojciech Bogumił”, with particular attention to the distinction between its year-round and seasonal activities. The research examines several key HR areas, including recruitment, onboarding, motivation, remuneration, training, and employee relations. By making qualitative research it was possible to formulate practical recommendations for improving HR processes in gastronomy enterprises operating within diversified business models.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Evolution and Strategic Role of Human Resource Management

The concept of human resource management has undergone substantial transformation over the past century. In its early stages, personnel management was primarily limited to administrative responsibilities such as handling payroll, maintaining employee records, and ensuring compliance with labour regulations. Within this traditional approach, employees were largely treated as elements of the production process, while managerial efforts concentrated mainly on maintaining efficiency and implementing control mechanisms.

With time, the perception of employees gradually evolved from a purely mechanistic view toward a more strategic and people-oriented perspective. Contemporary human resource management highlights the importance of aligning human capital with the overall organizational strategy (Boxall and Purcell, 2015, p. 31). Employees are increasingly recognized as essential drivers of value creation, innovation, and sustainable competitive advantage (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014, p. 27). As a result, strategic HRM encompasses areas such as workforce planning, talent development, performance management, and the cultivation of organizational culture, all of which are closely connected with long-term business goals (Bratton and Gold, 2017, p. 63).

Recent approaches, including Strategic HRM 2.0 and Agile HR, further emphasize flexibility, employee well-being, and the use of data in managerial decision-making (Zaid, 2025). They also stress the growing integration of HR functions with broader strategic management processes. This evolution clearly indicates that human resource management has

moved beyond its traditional supportive role and has become an important partner in shaping organizational performance and long-term success.

2.2. Human Resource Management in the Gastronomy Sector

The gastronomy sector faces specific human resource management challenges resulting from its labour-intensive character, intensive customer interaction, and highly dynamic operational environment. Employees play a direct role in shaping customer experiences, which means their performance has a strong impact on service quality, customer satisfaction, and the overall reputation of the brand. For this reason, effective HRM practices are essential not only for maintaining operational efficiency but also for supporting the long-term competitiveness of gastronomy enterprises (Burke and Hughes, 2019, p. 118).

A key characteristic of this industry is the relatively high level of employee turnover (Baijal and Potroz, 2021, p. 4). Factors such as irregular working schedules, physically demanding tasks, high levels of stress, and limited opportunities for career advancement often contribute to workforce instability. Frequent staff changes generate additional costs related to recruitment and training while also disrupting service consistency and organizational continuity.

Moreover, the gastronomy sector is significantly affected by seasonal fluctuations in demand (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2019, p. 42). This is particularly visible in businesses located in tourist areas, where customer traffic varies depending on the time of year. As a result, many enterprises function within two distinct operational contexts: the stability typical of year-round establishments and the flexibility required in seasonal operations. These contrasting conditions necessitate different approaches to managing human resources.

2.3. HRM Models in Seasonal and Year-Round Gastronomy

Several theoretical frameworks can be used to analyse human resource management practices within the gastronomy sector. One of them is the Harvard Model, which highlights the importance of long-term employment relationships, employee engagement, stakeholder interests, and the alignment between HR policies and organizational outcomes. This approach is particularly relevant for year-round gastronomic enterprises, where stability, a strong organizational culture, and employee retention are key priorities. Regular investment in training, professional development, and employee involvement helps maintain consistent service quality and supports sustainable organizational performance (Beer, 1984, p. 41).

A different perspective is offered by the Organizational Life Cycle (OLC) model, which is often more applicable to seasonal operations. Businesses operating seasonally frequently

follow recurring short-term cycles that resemble stages such as start-up, growth, maturity, and closure. Within this context, HR practices tend to concentrate on fast recruitment processes, intensive onboarding, maximizing employee performance during peak demand periods, and organizing the closure of operations at the end of the season (Adizes, 1999).

Nevertheless, the contingency model provides the most comprehensive framework for analysing HR practices in this sector (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). According to this approach, HR strategies should be adapted to specific contextual factors, including seasonality, market volatility, organizational structure, and labour market conditions. In the gastronomy industry-where a single enterprise may operate both year-round and seasonal activities-the contingency perspective allows organizations to design HR strategies that are differentiated yet consistent with the overall operational environment.

2.4. Key Human Resource Areas in Gastronomic Enterprises

Effective human resource management in gastronomy encompasses several interrelated functional areas that directly influence organizational performance and employee stability. Among the most critical HR domains are recruitment, onboarding, motivation, compensation systems, training and development, and employee relations management.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment ensures the acquisition of appropriate human capital, while selection minimizes the risk of mismatched hiring decisions. In the gastronomy sector, recruitment strategies differ significantly between seasonal and year-round operations due to varying time horizons and workforce stability requirements. Efficient recruitment directly influences service quality, operational continuity, and cost control (Prokopowicz, 2023, p. 56).

Recruitment and selection represent key HR processes that significantly affect the quality of the workforce and the overall effectiveness of an organization. Within the gastronomy sector, these activities are particularly important due to the industry's high employee turnover and changing staffing requirements.

In seasonal businesses, recruitment processes tend to focus primarily on speed, availability, and the ability of candidates to adapt quickly to the work environment. Selection procedures are often simplified and place greater emphasis on behavioural attributes such as the ability to work under pressure, teamwork skills, and immediate readiness to perform operational tasks. In this context, formal qualifications may be considered less important than flexibility and availability.

By contrast, recruitment in year-round operations usually takes on a more strategic and long-term perspective. Employers are more likely to prioritize previous professional experience, compatibility with the organizational culture, loyalty, and the potential for further development. The selection process may therefore include several stages, such as structured interviews, competency evaluations, or trial work shifts. In such organizations, employees are generally treated as long-term assets rather than short-term labour resources.

These distinctions illustrate how HR practices in the gastronomy industry are strongly influenced by the operational model of a business, which further supports the relevance of the contingency approach to human resource management.

Onboarding

Onboarding refers to the structured process of integrating new employees into the organization. Effective onboarding accelerates adaptation, enhances role clarity, and reduces early turnover. In year-round enterprises, onboarding may involve formal orientation programs, mentoring systems, and gradual skills development. In contrast, seasonal businesses often implement accelerated onboarding focused on immediate operational readiness.

Motivation and Compensation Systems

Employee motivation in service-based industries is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic determinants. Extrinsic factors typically include financial elements such as wages, bonuses, and other monetary rewards, whereas intrinsic motivation is associated with aspects like recognition, a positive work environment, opportunities for personal and professional development, and a certain level of autonomy in performing tasks (Maslow, 2013, p. 35).

In the gastronomy sector, compensation systems frequently consist of a combination of fixed salaries and performance-related components, for example service bonuses or tips. In seasonal businesses, motivational mechanisms are often based mainly on short-term financial incentives. In contrast, enterprises operating throughout the year are more likely to implement broader motivational frameworks that may include career advancement opportunities and various non-financial benefits.

The success of motivational systems largely depends on how well they correspond with employee expectations as well as with the operational characteristics of the organization.

Training and Development

Training represents an important investment in human capital and has a direct impact on service quality as well as customer satisfaction. In year-round gastronomic operations, training initiatives often include ongoing professional development, leadership preparation, and

the implementation of standardized service procedures aimed at maintaining consistent service quality.

In contrast, seasonal businesses usually face significant time constraints, which often leads to the use of shortened training programs focused mainly on operational efficiency and the fundamental principles of customer service. While such an approach allows employees to become operational quickly, limited training may result in a higher likelihood of mistakes and may negatively affect the overall customer experience.

As a result, the scale and intensity of training activities are largely dependent on the expected length and stability of employment within a given enterprise (Salas et al., 2012, p. 75).

Employee Relations and Organizational Climate

Employee relations encompass the management of interactions between employees and management, including communication practices, mechanisms for resolving conflicts, and the development of organizational culture. In the gastronomy sector, effective communication and strong teamwork are particularly important due to the fast-paced and high-pressure nature of daily operations (Schein, 2010, p. 24).

Enterprises operating throughout the entire year usually place greater emphasis on long-term team integration and the gradual development of organizational culture. By contrast, in seasonal businesses the primary objective is to build quick team cohesion and ensure efficient collaboration over a relatively short period of time.

Well-developed employee relations contribute positively to job satisfaction, help limit employee turnover, and support greater consistency in service delivery.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The research was conducted in the form of a case study focusing on the gastronomic enterprise LUKRUM II Wojciech Bogumił, which simultaneously operates within both year-round and seasonal business models. In the qualitative stage of the study, a semi-structured interview technique was employed to gain deeper insights into human resource management practices, managerial decision-making processes, and the organizational challenges arising from the company's dual operational structure.

3.2. Research Objectives and Questions

The objective of the study is to identify and compare human resource management processes in seasonal and year-round operations, with particular emphasis on recruitment, onboarding, motivation, compensation systems, training practices, and employee relations.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What human resource management practices are applied in year-round and seasonal operations?
2. What are the main differences in recruitment, onboarding, motivation and remuneration between seasonal and year-round operations?
3. What human resource management challenges arise from the seasonal nature of gastronomic activity?

The central research thesis assumes that seasonal and year-round operations are characterized by significantly differentiated HR solutions, which influence recruitment effectiveness, employee adaptation processes, and workforce stability.

3.3. Method and Research Procedure

The primary research method was a semi-structured interview conducted with the business owner and the manager responsible for HR-related processes (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). The interview constituted the qualitative core of the study and was carried out in the form of a face-to-face meeting. The total duration of the interview was approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes. The interview was conducted on 20 February 2026 in Szczecin (West Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland) at the restaurant Smażalnia Ryb Turzyn, located at 1 Kordeckiego Street.

The interview was conducted in Polish to ensure communicative precision and respondent comfort. With the participants' consent, the conversation was recorded and subsequently transcribed for analytical purposes.

The interview guide included thematic blocks covering:

- recruitment strategy,
- employee onboarding processes,
- motivational and compensation systems,
- training policy,
- internal communication and team relations,
- challenges related to employee turnover and seasonality.

3.4. Data Analysis

The empirical material was collected through an in-depth interview, which was recorded using a voice recorder. Subsequently, the most important responses of the interviewee, together

with the resulting conclusions, were transcribed and organized in Microsoft Word. These materials were then used as the basis for further analysis of the differences between seasonal and year-round human resource management systems. This research is based on a single-case study, which naturally limits the possibility of broadly generalizing the findings to the entire gastronomy sector. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis is largely grounded in the perspective of management, which may introduce a certain degree of interpretative bias and reduce the diversity of viewpoints represented in the results.

Despite these methodological limitations, the in-depth interview still provides valuable, context-specific insights into the structural features of human resource management within an enterprise that simultaneously operates under both seasonal and year-round models. The presence of this dual operational structure increases the analytical value of the case, as it allows for a more detailed understanding of how seasonality influences the configuration of HR practices within a single organizational framework.

4. Results

4.1. Recruitment and Workforce Planning

In the seasonal model in LUKRUM II company, workforce planning is primarily experience based and reactive. Staffing needs are estimated based on previous seasons' sales data and weather forecasts, with limited use of advanced analytical tools. Recruitment is fast and operationally driven, focusing mainly on availability, stress resistance, and readiness to work weekends. The selection process is short and simplified, typically limited to a brief interview lasting 15–20 minutes.

Recruitment channels in seasonal operations rely heavily on informal networks, employee referrals, and local social media groups. Cost efficiency plays a key role, and external recruitment agencies are generally avoided due to financial constraints.

In contrast, the year-round model applies a more structured and forward-looking approach. Workforce planning is based on sales indicators, turnover rates, and long-term development strategies. Recruitment processes are more formalized, often including multiple interviews and trial working days. Emphasis is placed on cultural fit and long-term organizational alignment. For managerial positions, professional platforms such as LinkedIn and industry-specific job portals are utilized.

4.2. Onboarding and Training Practices

In seasonal operations, onboarding is compressed and task oriented. Training typically lasts one to two days and focuses primarily on operational readiness, including cash register handling, hygiene standards, and basic customer service. Learning occurs predominantly “on the job,” and no formal onboarding programs are implemented. The priority is rapid adaptation to high-intensity working conditions.

By contrast, the year-round model emphasizes structured and long-term onboarding. New employees participate in multi-week adaptation processes supported by designated mentors. Training extends beyond operational tasks and includes service quality standards, sales techniques, and managerial competencies.

The findings indicate that the seasonal model prioritizes speed and efficiency, whereas the year-round model invests in systematic employee development.

4.3. Motivation and Compensation Systems

In seasonal operations, financial incentives constitute the primary motivational mechanism. Tips, sales-based bonuses, and overtime compensation are the dominant drivers of engagement. Wage rates during peak season are often slightly higher compared to off-season periods. Seasonal employees are predominantly oriented toward short-term earnings rather than long-term organizational benefits.

In the year-round model, motivation is based on a broader system combining financial and non-financial incentives. Quarterly bonuses, promotion opportunities, professional development programs, and employment stability play a significant role. Employees value long-term security and career progression more than immediate high earnings.

These findings suggest that seasonal HR systems are transaction-oriented, while year-round systems are relationship-oriented.

4.4. Employee Relations and Retention

The study indicates that employee retention strategies differ substantially between the two models. In seasonal operations, retention focuses on inviting proven employees to return in subsequent seasons and offering them priority rehiring. Efforts are made to create a positive team atmosphere through informal integration practices such as shared meals and flexible scheduling. However, high employee turnover and unexpected absences during peak periods remain major challenges. In contrast, year-round operations implement structured retention strategies, including tenure-based salary increases, defined career paths, and additional benefits. Regular team meetings and one-to-one feedback sessions support internal communication and

organizational cohesion. The findings demonstrate that seasonal retention is cyclical and short-term, while year-round retention is strategic and development oriented.

4.5. Comparison of selected aspects of seasonal and year-round operations.

The results of the qualitative analysis indicate significant differences in the structure and functioning of human resource management systems in seasonal and year-round gastronomic operations. These differences concern both the main HR challenges and the organizational approaches to recruitment, motivation, and employee retention. In order to synthetically present the key findings of the study, the most important characteristics and challenges identified during the interview are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Comparison of HR Characteristics and Challenges in Seasonal and Year-Round Gastronomic Operations

HR Area	Seasonal Operations	Year-Round Operations
Main HR challenges	sudden employee turnover; staff shortages during peak demand; limited availability of qualified candidates	maintaining employee motivation during low-demand periods; high fixed employment costs; strong competition for qualified personnel
Recruitment approach	rapid recruitment focused on immediate operational needs	more structured recruitment process and careful candidate selection
Onboarding and training	short and practical onboarding focused on quick adaptation	structured onboarding combined with mentoring and gradual skill development
Motivation system	performance-based financial incentives linked to work intensity during the season	long-term motivational systems including stability of employment and additional benefits
Retention strategy	cyclical retention strategies adjusted to the tourist season	development-oriented retention mechanisms supporting long-term employee commitment
Workforce planning	high operational flexibility and short-term staffing adjustments	strategic workforce planning and stable employment structure
Potential improvements (without budget constraints)	hiring a dedicated HR manager and introducing a team-performance-based bonus system	expanding employee benefits and establishing an internal training academy

Source: Own conclusion based on qualitative analysis.

The comparison presented in Table 1 clearly demonstrates that seasonal and year-round operations require different approaches to human resource management. Seasonal businesses prioritize operational flexibility, rapid recruitment processes, and performance-based motivation systems due to fluctuating demand and the temporary nature of employment. In contrast, year-round establishments focus on long-term workforce planning, structured recruitment, and development-oriented retention strategies. These differences directly affect employee stability, the efficiency of adaptation processes, and the overall functioning of the organization.

The following section presents answers to the research questions based on the findings of the qualitative research.

The first research question addressed in this study concerned the human resource management practices applied in year-round and seasonal gastronomic operations. The findings indicate that human resource management practices differ significantly depending on the operational model.

In seasonal operations, HR practices are primarily operational, short-term, and flexibility oriented. Recruitment is rapid and simplified, onboarding is compressed and task-focused, and motivation relies mainly on financial incentives such as tips and sales-based bonuses. Workforce planning is based largely on prior seasonal experience and short-term forecasts. Retention strategies are cyclical and focused on rehiring previously employed staff in subsequent seasons. In contrast, year-round operations implement more structured and strategic HR practices. Recruitment processes are multi-stage and emphasize cultural fit and long-term commitment. Onboarding is systematic and supported by mentoring. Motivation systems combine financial and non-financial elements, including development opportunities and employment stability. Retention strategies are long-term and development oriented.

Moving to the second research question, which concerns the main differences in recruitment, onboarding, motivation and remuneration between seasonal and year-round operations, several key distinctions can be identified.

Recruitment in seasonal operations is accelerated and availability-focused, while in year-round operations it is structured and competence-based. When it comes to onboarding in the seasonal model, it is short-term and operational, typically lasting one to two days, whereas in year-round operations it extends over several weeks and includes mentoring and structured training components. Regarding employee motivation, seasonal businesses tend to rely predominantly on transaction-based and financially driven incentives. Employees are primarily oriented toward short-term earnings, while year-round operations implement a more

comprehensive motivational framework including bonuses, career development, training opportunities, and job security. A noticeable difference can also be observed in remuneration systems. In seasonal activity, remuneration is often intensified during peak periods, including higher hourly rates and overtime compensation. Year-round operations maintain more stable salary systems with periodic performance-based incentives.

Finally, the last research question examined the workforce management challenges resulting from the seasonal nature of gastronomic activity. The study identified several key workforce management challenges resulting from seasonality.

Firstly, high employee turnover and sudden resignations create instability during peak operational periods. Second, absenteeism during the busiest months significantly disrupts workflow organization. Third, there is a limited availability of qualified candidates willing to accept short-term employment contracts. Additionally, the necessity of rapid onboarding reduces the time available for proper training, which may affect service quality and operational consistency. Seasonality also limits the possibility of implementing long-term development strategies and building a stable organizational culture. Overall, the findings demonstrate that seasonality increases operational uncertainty and forces managers to prioritize flexibility and short-term efficiency over long-term HR development strategies.

4.6. Interpretation of research results

The qualitative findings provide compelling evidence that seasonal and year-round gastronomic operations are characterized by structurally differentiated human resource management systems shaped by distinct temporal and strategic logics. The seasonal model reflects a short-term, operationally driven HR architecture centered on flexibility, rapid recruitment, accelerated onboarding, and predominantly financial motivational mechanisms. Workforce stability within this model remains inherently limited, while retention strategies assume a cyclical form, primarily relying on the rehiring of returning employees in subsequent seasons. In contrast, the year-round model operates within a long-term, strategically oriented HR framework in which recruitment is formalized and competence-based, onboarding processes are structured and supported by mentorship, and motivational systems integrate both financial and developmental incentives. Retention mechanisms are embedded in career development pathways, structured communication systems, and employment stability, reinforcing organizational continuity and cultural cohesion. These structural divergences substantially influence recruitment effectiveness, employee adaptation processes, and overall workforce stability. While seasonal operations prioritize immediate operational efficiency,

often at the expense of sustained employee development, year-round enterprises invest in sustainable HR infrastructures designed to maintain team continuity and organizational culture. The findings ultimately demonstrate that seasonality functions as a decisive contextual determinant, reshaping HR architectures from development-oriented, stability-based systems into efficiency-driven, short-cycle frameworks.

5. Discussion

The findings of the qualitative study largely confirm the theoretical assumptions presented in the literature review and reinforce the relevance of a contingency-based approach to human resource management in gastronomy.

5.1. Strategic vs. Operational HRM

The literature emphasizes the evolution of HRM from an administrative to a strategic function, particularly within the framework of Strategic HRM and Agile HR (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). The results of the present study demonstrate that this transformation is clearly visible in year-round operations, where HR practices are aligned with long-term organizational objectives. Recruitment is competence-based, onboarding is structured, and employee development is treated as a strategic investment.

In contrast, seasonal operations reflect a more operational and short-cycle HR structure. HR processes are primarily oriented toward immediate efficiency and workforce flexibility rather than long-term strategic alignment. This finding supports the theoretical distinction between strategic and transactional HR approaches and illustrates how operational context determines the maturity of HR systems.

5.2. Seasonality and Organizational Context

The literature on gastronomy highlights high turnover, dynamic demand patterns, and labour intensity as defining characteristics of the sector (Nickson, 2007, p. 95). The empirical findings confirm that seasonality significantly intensifies these challenges. High employee rotation, absenteeism during peak periods, and limited availability of qualified short-term candidates were identified as key workforce management problems.

These results are consistent with existing research indicating that seasonal enterprises prioritize flexibility over stability. The study therefore supports the assumption that seasonality structurally constrains the implementation of long-term HR strategies.

5.3. Recruitment and Onboarding Practices

The literature suggests that recruitment in seasonal enterprises prioritizes availability and adaptability, while year-round businesses emphasize long-term commitment and cultural fit (Nickson, 2013). The findings fully confirm this differentiation. Seasonal recruitment is accelerated and simplified, whereas year-round recruitment is multi-stage and competence oriented.

Similarly, onboarding practices reflect theoretical expectations. Seasonal onboarding is condensed and operationally focused, while year-round onboarding includes mentoring and gradual adaptation. This alignment between theory and empirical findings reinforces the validity of contingency-based HR models in explaining differentiated HR structures within one industry.

5.4. Motivation and Compensation Systems

Theoretical frameworks indicate that seasonal businesses rely primarily on extrinsic motivators, whereas year-round enterprises integrate intrinsic and developmental incentives (Ryan and Deci, 2017). The study confirms this distinction. In seasonal operations, financial rewards such as tips and bonuses dominate motivational systems. In contrast, year-round operations combine financial incentives with career development, stability, and structured feedback mechanisms.

This finding supports motivational theory suggesting that employment duration and organizational stability shape the relative importance of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivators.

5.5. The Relevance of the Contingency Model

Among the theoretical frameworks presented in the literature review, the contingency model appears to offer the most comprehensive explanatory perspective. The empirical evidence demonstrates that HR practices are not universally applicable but must be adapted to contextual variables such as seasonality, demand volatility, and organizational structure.

The analysed enterprise, operating simultaneously under seasonal and year-round models, illustrates that differentiated yet coherent HR strategies can coexist within one organizational framework. This confirms the central assumption of contingency theory: HR effectiveness depends on alignment between organizational context and managerial practices.

Theoretical Contribution

The study contributes to the existing literature by empirically illustrating how dual operational models within one gastronomic enterprise generate structurally differentiated HR systems. While previous studies often analyse seasonal and year-round businesses separately,

this case study demonstrates how both logics function within a single organizational entity. The findings therefore extend the application of contingency-based HRM theory to hybrid gastronomic enterprises and highlight the structural impact of seasonality on HR architecture.

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to identify and compare human resource management processes in seasonal and year-round gastronomic operations through an in-depth case study of a dual-model enterprise. The qualitative analysis indicates that seasonality constitutes a fundamental contextual factor shaping the structure, logic, and strategic orientation of HR systems. The findings reveal that seasonal and year-round operations rely on structurally differentiated HR solutions across key functional areas, including recruitment, onboarding, motivation, compensation, and employee retention. The seasonal model is predominantly characterized by a short-term orientation, high operational flexibility, accelerated recruitment and adaptation processes, and the dominance of financial motivators, aimed at maximizing immediate operational efficiency. In contrast, the year-round model operates within a strategically oriented HR framework, based on long-term workforce planning, structured onboarding processes, continuous employee development, and retention mechanisms that support employment stability. These structural differences directly influence recruitment effectiveness, the quality of employee adaptation, and overall workforce stability within the organization. Furthermore, the results indicate that the contingency model provides the most appropriate analytical perspective for examining HR practices in gastronomy, as it emphasizes the alignment of human resource management strategies with contextual variables such as seasonality and demand volatility. From a managerial perspective, the study highlights the need to design flexible yet internally coherent HR systems, capable of balancing short-term operational efficiency with long-term workforce sustainability in hybrid gastronomic enterprises.

Although the study is limited due to its qualitative nature and single-case design, it provides valuable theoretical and practical insights into the structural impact of seasonality on HR system architecture and constitutes a starting point for future research within the gastronomy sector. In particular, future studies could include quantitative research involving employees working in both seasonal and year-round operations, which would enable a more detailed comparison of how HR processes are perceived in both organizational models. Such research could examine areas such as job satisfaction, the effectiveness of onboarding processes, work motivation, and employees' willingness to remain in the organization in

subsequent seasons. The results would allow for statistical verification of the conclusions derived from qualitative analysis and could provide additional practical recommendations for owners and managers of gastronomic enterprises in designing more effective and context-adjusted human resource management systems.

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