Strategic human resource management in aviation industry a new normal perspective after the COVID-19 crisis: a case study of Bangkok Airways

Kanittha Charernmit* and Pongsapak Treruttanaset

1College of Hospitality Industry Management, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, 1 U Thong Nok rd., Dusit, Bangkok, Thailand, 10300

Abstract. This is quantitative research that study the strategic human resource management of the aviation industry in Thailand in the new normal culture era with objective to study the level of strategic human resource management factors of the Thai aviation industry in the new normal culture era. This is a quantitative research study. The data were collected by using a number of sample questionnaires, which is a ground staff employee of Bangkok Airways. The sample group of employees were assigned into 2 groups in order to assess the level of human resource management and the level of competitive advantage of Bangkok Airways. The first group is a group of 310 employees, and the second group is a supervisor and manager, totaling 275 people, a total of 585 people. The data analysis in this research were, Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation and T-test. 2 groups Pearson's Product-moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis. The results of this research shown that Bangkok Airways focusing on the importance of Human Resource Information System (HRIS) at the very most order, From the research result, the researcher recommend that the airline should adopt strategic human resource management to create a competitive advantage in the aviation industry in Thailand in the new normal culture era in order to develop the organization's competency in airline business accordingly. Keywords: Strategic Human Resource Management, Thailand, Aviation Industry.

1 Introduction

From the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) since December 2019, it has spread to many countries in different regions around the world and has mutated into many species, causing a wide impact to social, and economic disruption around the world. The transportation around the world whether land transportation, sea transportation and air transportation around the world has been affected. The coronavirus pandemic caused many countries to shut down the country in order to prevent people to enter their country, this is

*Corresponding author: kanittha.ch@ssru.ac.th
because to prevent the spreading of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Several countries have provided the information and measurement to travelers to reduce the risk of acute respiratory infections via travel health standard recommendations from World Health Organization (WHO) that has advised for international traffic in relation to the outbreak of the Coronavirus 2019 as to avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough, include travel restrictions, lockdowns, business restrictions and closures, quarantines, testing systems, and tracing contacts of the infected.

The air transport industry is highly vulnerable to environmental changes as was seen when the recent COVID-19 pandemic caused most airline operations to cease (Kankaew, 2022). People stopped traveling abroad, affecting the aviation industry adversely. The airlines had to reduce the flights, and only domestic flights remained. Airline safety measures regarding travelling are implemented such as aircraft spraying, sterilization, cleaning, and disinfecting according to standards, equipping the aircraft with the most efficient HEPA air filter that can trap dust particles or bacteria. Most importantly, passengers must wear masks at all times when entering the terminal area and on the plane throughout the journey. Serving food and beverages during the flight was not provided and passengers were not allowed to bring food and beverages to eat on board. Passengers were required to fill out a health form which was distributed before traveling at the boarding gate on each flight. For airline crews, they must have their body temperature checked before the flight. They will also need to wear a mask and gloves throughout the service and after the flight. All the above-mentioned approaches are considered a new way (new normal) of traveling by air transport which most airlines have to adjust themselves to all changes that has been occurred.

The service personnel are also an important factor to consider. Some airlines try to innovate new technology to help service on grounds and on board, like using AI system to let the passenger operate things by themselves or attempting to reduce the number of ground staffs and call-service center staffs. However, they may find some difficulty or limitations when using AI instead of humans. Therefore, the study of human resource management and the development of technology should be conducted to tackle with the challenges after the COVID-19 pandemic as the passengers will travel with “social distance”. This will lead Thailand’s aviation industry to another level and thrive sustainably.

However, to adopt the marketing strategy and human resource management, the airlines must consider the principle of safety, passengers’ behavior, and the passengers’ satisfaction as well. Thus, this is the perfect time to prepare Thai airlines business for the time after the pandemic is over. The restructuring of organization for unlock down is mainly the planning of human resource management in the long term, focusing on the use workforce and talents most efficiently. There are 3 components a) Changing the business vision to human resource planning b) The 4 Mission including organizational management, manpower management, human resource development and creating incentive systems c) Operation with technology to manage manpower.

For Bangkok Airways, it has been flying since 1968, operating for more than 60 years, subsequent to Thai Airways, without any problems in business status during the COVID-19 outbreak. Currently, Bangkok Airways is flying both domestically and internationally. In consequently, COVID-19 is on the brink of being extinct and is becoming endemic. The aviation industry is now operating normally. In order to provide Bangkok Airways a competitive advantage throughout the new normal culture era, the researcher is interested in analyzing Bangkok Airways’ strategic human resource management and management as following objectives.

Objectives: to study the level of strategic human resource management factors of Thailand aviation industry in new normal culture after the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.
2 Literature Review

2.1 Strategic Human Resource Management

Strategic human resource management is the integration between human resource management and the organization strategic decision-making process to enable organizations to cope with the changing environment (Karami et al., 2004). It is a guideline to encourage the organization to reach their highest potential and have a competitive advantage through the organization’s human resource management (Gannon et al., 2012), while Gary Dessler (2009) said that strategic human resource management refers to the ability to connect the principles in human resource development that enable organizations to achieve their goals by setting goals and having a human resource management operation system that can develop human abilities to achieve the organization’s target within the boundaries that have been set. Therefore, strategic human resource management is a combination between organizational strategic goals and objectives in the form of action plans for decision-making. In consequence, Human resource management is an important process that can create organizational competitive advantages.

As for Danai Thienput (2000) suggested that strategic human resource management consists of 3 components: first component: business vision transformation to formulate strategies and human resource plans, second component: managing 4 operational functions as follows: organizational management, manpower management, human resource development and establishing an incentive reward system by shifting the conceptual framework to more business and strategy, third component: bringing technology system to support the human resource management in performing duties according to the organizational goals such as Employee Information System (EIS) with information systems for employee to perform their duty, along with Executive Management Information System (EMIS), where EMIS is a database for Executive which is related to management analysis and decision.

The human resource management system must have an information system which is a system developed to support human resource operations from planning, hiring, development and training including performance and remuneration system as well as disciplinary action to enable effective human resource management (Ketchonan & Kiatkomol, 2002; Ushakov, 2016). Moreover, human resource information system (Human Resource Information System: HRIS) is a crucial system that organizations must implement to collect and analyze their employees’ data.

Ranieri (1993) states that HRIS is a comprehensive system for collecting data including payroll, profit, absenteeism and leave data as well as various administrative information such as a required training and development program together with an adequate level of employment or various skills of employee, are the most effective information to enable team effectiveness. An Executive Management Information System (EMIS) is another system that collects important information and is necessary for administration and operational planning. The primary purpose of Executive Management Information System information systems is to collect information systematically, reduce data redundancy and can connect to existing databases and organizational strategies as the collected data can be analyzed to obtain useful information that can be utilize to support effective management planning and decision-making. The information collected includes staff information, all work system information, organizational strategies information and plans that are connected to each other so that the management can make decisions in managing and operate the organization properly. Meanwhile, the data can be updated, retrieved, displayed according to the specified format and conditions. The output format includes data reports, images, and charts (Laudon & Laudon, 2002; Hobusch & Mißler-Behr, 2017; Ushakov & Chich-Jen,
Schuler (1992) summarized strategic human resource management regarding an integration strategy of human resource management (ISHRM) as well as Strategic Alignment (SA) in human resource management that it covers two dimensions as integration and transformation. In the first dimension, the strategic integration of human resource management involves the management of human resources and business strategies to achieve the strategic needs of the company. In the second dimension, it is the human resource practice guidelines that are relevant to their daily work. Both dimensions reflect the ideal fit. The first dimension is related to the internal fit of the human resource management system while the second dimension is emphasized on maintaining harmony through the responsibilities of employees in the organization.

![Diagram of Strategic Human Resource Management](https://example.com/diagram.png)

Fig. 1. Strategic Human Resource Management (Source: Thienput, 2000).
In addition, the strategic human resource management system also contains the learning information system (LIS) that the organization must implement, this can be categorized into 4 levels as follows: The first level is for the Operational-level systems, which is the learning information system for operational level which support operators in basic operations and various transaction tasks.

The second level is for Knowledge-level system, which supports professionals who are knowledgeable with data and can apply new knowledge to support the flow of documents control in the organization. The third level is for Management–level systems, which is an information system that helps in monitoring, controlling, making decisions for the middle management in managing the organization. The fourth level is for Strategic-level systems, which is the information system that enhances high-level management for their long-term planning.

2.2 Human Resources Development

Human capital development is the organizational employee’s development towards the intellectual capital of the organization which includes the basic skills needed to work such as teamwork skills, technology skills including knowledge and understanding of organizational systems in connection with existing organizational knowledge (Holland et al., 2006). This could be conducted via training system, mentoring system or educational system to empower employee capability to perform their job effectively whether individual level, team level or organizational level.

In human capital development, there should be more articulateness in learning because development process is crucial. Therefore, indicators in developing human capital should be focusing as following: (1) Focusing on investing in people rather than in spending as it contribute the long-term good result and value-added accordingly. (2) Focusing on Human resource management policies, as it is the effective part of organizational differentiation. Moreover, should focusing on development that results in continuous learning, such as recruiting, selecting, retaining and rewarding talented employees; (3) Focusing on formation of attitudes, behaviors and individual acceptation to achieve employees’ loyalty and commitment towards organizational goals.

As for the overall development of human capital (Swanson & Holton, 2009) categorized into two paradigms as following: The first paradigm is the Learning paradigms, which is the most widely used in human resource development paradigm shift in America. It is divided into 3 issues along these lines: 1. Individual learning (Individual learning) focuses on the learning of the individual and the outcomes that arise with the learners. The characteristics of the learning method consisted of adult learning and learning design. (Instructional design) 2. Learning from performance (Performance-Based learning), which at present, most human resource development uses to focus on improving the performance of individuals. The principle comes from continuous learning, however learning that affects the overall performance of the organization must be implemented from systematic learning. 3. Team-level learning and organizational performance are the main focuses of whole system learning, which developing through a three-level learning framework as following: levels for the person, the team, and the organization. The second paradigm, known as the performance paradigms, is one that reflects how a person’s performance or performance develops by utilizing technology and emphasizing overall outcomes However, the process includes both learning and non-learning, i.e., putting some non-learning concepts into practice and those unrelated to the learning system are separated from the group. There are two components to the operational paradigm:

The first component is the development of individual performance (Individual
Performance Improvement) focuses on the use of technology by those who control it and who are responsible for its performance.

The second component is an entire perspective with both learning and non-learning (Whole system performance improvement), it occurs throughout the organization and is also referred to as a performance consulting or performance improvement.

Leonard Nadler (1984), he gave the idea of human resource development that it is an operation that allows individual to gain experience and learning over a period of time in order to improve working capability, and there are 3 aspects.

Firstly, training, is an activity that will create learning and focusing on the current job (Present Job).

Secondly, education is considered a direct way of human resource development because education enhancing knowledge, skills, attitudes as well as enhancing the ability of employee to adapt in every aspect of the organization by focusing on preparing employees for future jobs. Thirdly, development, this is to prepare employees or staff to be able grows along with the change and growth of the organization accordingly

2.3 Learning Organization

Learning Organization is a concept or philosophy of human development that can lead the organization to success in the midst of global competition in the era of globalization. With the rapid and continuous change of technology. Therefore, an organization that will survive and be able to compete must be an organization that builds employees’ ability to learn continuously in the organization which is to create an organization to become a learning organization.

Peter Senge (1990) proposed the concept of creating a learning organization into the fifth disciplines. The fundamental guideline to create a learning organization, which will drive and support the creation of a learning organization consists of following aspect: The first aspect, being a person of excellence (Personal Mastery), which is a learning characteristic of people in the organization that is always pursuing to learn new things to enhance their abilities. The second aspect, is a model of consciousness (Mental Model), which is the model of people in an organization that reflects the behavior of people in their point view to create clarity on every matter towards the world and phenomena that has arisen in order to make the right decisions and respond appropriately to the changes that has been appeared.

The third aspect, having a shared vision (Share Vision), which is having a shared vision of people throughout the organization by developing their vision in line with the shared vision of the organization. This will encourage the integration of members who have expectations for change and progress under the same goals of the whole organization. The fourth aspect, learning as a team (Team Learning), which is learning together by members of the organization and relying on the knowledge and ideas of members in exchanging and developing the intelligence and ability of the team to influence the performance. Moreover, the learning team must rely on information systems as a tool to develop the efficiency and competency of the team accordingly. The fifth aspect, is to think systematically (System Thinking), which is the process of finding the relationship between things that happen at every stage of development.

3 Research Methodology

For this research study is quantitative research. This is a quantitative research study. The data were collected by using a number of sample questionnaires, which is a ground staff employee of Bangkok Airways.
The sample group of employees was assigned into 2 groups in order to assess the level of human resource management and the level of competitive advantage of Bangkok Airways.

The first group is a group of 310 employees, and the second group is a supervisor and manager, totaling 275 people, a total of 585 people. The data analysis in this research was, Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation and T-test. 2 groups Pearson's Product-moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis and Multiple Regression Analysis.

4 Research Results

Bangkok Airways values every factor of Strategic Human Resource Management at a high level as following: Human Resources Information System (HRIS), Executive Management Information System (EMIS), Learning Information System (LIS), Human Capital Development (HCD), Strategic Alignment (SA) and Integration Strategy of Human Resource Management (ISHRM). The factor of Human Resource Information System (HRIS) is the highest level. Next in order are Strategic Alignment (SA) and Integration Strategy of Human Resource Management (ISHRM) which is in the same level. Follow by Learning information systems (LIS) and human capital development (HCD) respectively.

5 Recommendations

It is essential to determine new practices and strategies that can allow air transport management to be enriched and to be successful said Kankaew (2022). As many customers fly with reputable carriers, therefore, customer satisfaction is the key to enhance airline business. For this reason, customer service department and management team of that airline are primarily responsible for arranging individualized hospitalization in response to various demand of customer and should take main responsibility to increase satisfaction in value-added procedure as it becomes essential in airline business which is an important tool to evaluate and maintain customer’s happiness and loyalty in a long-term. (Worasuwannarak & Kankaew, 2022).

On the other hand, if airlines that fail to satisfy and keep passengers, they are at risk of losing their customer. (Wang & Shu, 2016).Whereas, human resource development is crucial as it develop organizational employee towards organizational intellectual capital. The desirable thing in human resource development is the development of positive attitude towards the organization, especially within the rapid change of the business environment as the organization cannot predict which skills are suitable in the future, then positive attitude affects employee behavior. In today's fast-changing business environment, employees' continual development is essential.

That's leading to a new and more powerful role for chief learning officers: They're not just trainers anymore; they're transformers who are reshaping organizational capabilities and culture. (Lundberg & Westerman, 2020).

Therefore, the organization management must analyze the development plan, study the costs that affect the development of employee’s creativity, motivation, designing attractive incentives plan as well as enhancing customer interaction to improve the competitive advantage for business respectively.

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