

TRAINING AND DEVELOPING ELDERLY HUMAN RESOURCES  
FOR VIETNAM'S HOSPITALITY SECTOR AMID  
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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**Abstract**

*This study investigates the training and development of elderly human resources in Vietnam's hotel and restaurant sector in the context of digital transformation. Drawing on survey and transcript data from 56 elderly employees (aged 60–65) from Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh, Ha Long and Da Nang, the research explores their demographics, digital skills, training needs, perceived barriers, and motivations. The findings reveal that while elderly workers bring substantial service experience and motivation, they face challenges in adapting to digital tools due to limited training and workplace stereotypes. Tailored training programs that accommodate the learning preferences of elderly individuals, along with respect and intergenerational mentoring, can enhance their integration. The study contributes to theory by extending the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to elderly employees in hospitality and offers practical guidance for inclusive workforce development in Vietnam.*

**Keywords:** Elderly workforce, training and development, hotel and restaurant industry, Vietnam, digital transformation, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

**Đào tạo và phát triển nguồn nhân lực cao tuổi ngành khách sạn, nhà hàng ở Việt Nam trong bối cảnh chuyển đổi số**

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**Tóm tắt**

Nghiên cứu này tập trung vào vấn đề đào tạo và phát triển nguồn nhân lực cao tuổi trong ngành Khách sạn, nhà hàng tại Việt Nam trong bối cảnh chuyển đổi số. Dựa trên dữ liệu khảo sát và phỏng vấn 56 lao động lớn tuổi (từ 60-65 tuổi) tại Hà Nội, TP. Hồ Chí Minh, Hạ Long và Đà Nẵng, nghiên cứu phân tích đặc điểm nhân khẩu học, kỹ năng số, nhu cầu đào tạo, các rào cản cũng như động lực làm việc của họ. Kết quả cho thấy mặc dù người lao động cao tuổi có nhiều kinh nghiệm dịch vụ và động lực gắn bó, họ vẫn gặp khó khăn trong việc thích ứng với công cụ số do hạn chế về đào tạo và định kiến tại nơi làm việc. Các chương trình đào tạo được thiết kế phù hợp với phong cách học tập của người cao tuổi, kết hợp với sự tôn trọng và hình thức cố vấn liên thế hệ, có thể giúp tăng cường khả năng hòa nhập của họ. Về mặt lý thuyết, nghiên cứu mở rộng mô hình Chấp nhận Công nghệ (TAM) áp dụng cho người lao động cao tuổi trong ngành dịch vụ khách sạn, nhà hàng, đồng thời, đưa ra những gợi ý thực tiễn cho việc phát triển nguồn nhân lực toàn diện tại Việt Nam.

**Từ khóa:** Nguồn nhân lực cao tuổi, đào tạo và phát triển, ngành khách sạn, nhà hàng, Việt Nam, chuyển đổi số, mô hình Chấp nhận Công nghệ (TAM).

**1. Introduction**

Vietnam's hotel and restaurant industry is highly labor-intensive and essential for tourism, service quality, and cultural promotion. In recent years,

globalization, rising customer expectations, and especially digital technologies such as online booking, POS systems, CRM, and AI have reshaped operations and employee skill requirements (Buhalis & Leung,

2018; Jones et al., 2016).

Amid this shift, the elderly workforce, those aged 60 and above, remain active due to both necessity and passion. They offer experience, loyalty, and strong interpersonal skills valuable for customer service, yet struggle with digital adaptation. Factors such as slower learning pace, digital anxiety, and health issues hinder their inclusion (Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai, 2021), placing them at risk of marginalization in a technology-driven industry.

Despite their importance, few studies explore training strategies to support elderly workers in digital transformation. Most research centers on younger employees or developed markets (Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai, 2021; Trần Hữu Phước, 2022; Buhalis & Leung, 2018), leaving a gap in understanding inclusive workforce development in emerging economies.

This study addresses that gap by examining training and development for elderly staff in Vietnam's hospitality sector. It asks: (1) What is the current state of elderly workforce participation? (2) What challenges do they face in adapting to digitalization? (3) Which training strategies best support their integration? The research contributes theoretically by extending the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) to elderly employees and practically by offering guidance for managers and policymakers to design inclusive training programs.

## **2. Literature Review and Theoretical Bases**

### **2.1. Digital Transformation in Hospitality**

Digital transformation integrates technology into operations, customer interactions, and business models (Westerman et al., 2011). In hospitality, tools such as online booking, kiosks, and AI chatbots improve efficiency and personalizing experiences (Buhalis & Leung, 2018). Restaurants also benefit from POS and CRM systems that provide data for forecasting and loyalty programs (Jones et al., 2016; Kimes, 2018). In Vietnam, however, SMEs face barriers including limited resources, technical skills, and cultural reluctance toward automation (Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai, 2021).

### **2.2. Elderly Workforce in Services**

Employees aged 60+ contribute experience, loyalty, and soft skills valued in service industries (Taylor, 2014). In Vietnam, cultural respect for seniors further supports their participation. Yet

they face digital literacy gaps, slower adaptability, health constraints, and workplace stereotypes (Nguyễn, V.H. 2021). Elderly staff excel in interpersonal and mentoring roles (ILO, 2019), but without targeted training risk exclusion from digital workflows.

### **2.3. Training and Development Approaches**

One-size-fits-all training is ineffective for elderly workers. Studies stress customized, practice-oriented, and supportive learning (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). Effective methods include experiential learning, peer-to-peer mentoring, blended formats, and ongoing encouragement. These approaches align with adult learning theory (Knowles, 1984), which emphasizes relevance and self-directed motivation for mature learners.

### **2.4. Theoretical Frameworks**

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) explains adoption through perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). For elderly workers, PU relates to simplifying tasks, while PEOU reflects confidence in using tools. Extensions of TAM highlight training, organizational support, and culture (Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Service management theories (Parasuraman et al., 1988) stress human interaction in customer satisfaction, where elderly staff can excel if digital systems support them. Together, TAM and service management offer a framework to analyze digital adaptation and service quality.

### **2.5. Research Gap**

Although digital transformation and workforce aging are widely studied, few works address them jointly in emerging markets. In Vietnam, research emphasizes young staff or general technology adoption (Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai, 2021; Trần Hữu Phước, 2022). The training of elderly employees during digital transformation remains an overlooked yet critical issue, forming the gap this study aims to address.

## **3. Methodology**

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining survey data and open-ended transcripts from 56 elderly employees in Hanoi, HoChiMinh City, Halong and Danang. All participants aged 60–65, with at least 15 years of hospitality experience. Data collection included structured questionnaires on digital skills, training needs, barriers, and motivations,

complemented by qualitative narratives. Descriptive statistics and thematic coding were applied. Tables and figures summarize the demographic composition, training needs, barriers, and motivations.

4. Findings

This section presents the results from

the survey of 56 elderly employees in hotel and restaurant sector. It is organized into five subsections: demographics, current digital skills, training needs, perceived barriers, and motivations. Both quantitative and qualitative results are reported.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	60–65	56	100%
Gender	Female	36	64.3%
	Male	20	35.7%
Years of Experience	>15 years	24	42.9%
	>20 years	32	57.1%
Location	Hanoi	26	46.3%
	HoChiMinh City	10	17.9%
	Halong	10	17.9%
	Danang	10	17.9%
Job Roles	Front-of-house	26	46.4%
	Back-of-house	30	53.6%

Most respondents were between 60–65 years old with long experience in hospitality (over 15–20 years). Women made up the majority, and workers were spread across Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Halong, and Danang, covering both front-of-house and back-of-house roles.

4.2. Current Digital Skills and Technology Usage

Survey responses revealed that elderly employees demonstrated limited direct use of digital systems. While some were aware of POS or online booking systems, most did not interact with them daily. Instead, they performed tasks manually or relied on younger colleagues for digital functions.

Table 2. Current Exposure to Digital Tools

Tool/Platform	% Familiarity	% Daily Use
POS systems	40%	23%
CRM systems	33%	17%
Online booking	27%	7%
Social media (for work)	20%	5%
Housekeeping apps	13%	10%

Elderly employees had limited daily use of digital systems, though many were somewhat familiar with POS and CRM tools.

Social media and housekeeping apps were least used, showing a clear digital skills gap.

4.3. Training Needs

Table 3. Training Needs Identified by Elderly Employees

Category	Illustrative Responses	Frequency	%
Service skill	Professional knowledge/ skills	45	80.3%
Digital tools	Skills in using digital technology and social media	39	69.6%
New equipment/machinery	Skills in using new machinery and equipment	32	57.1%
Communication/customer care	Better communication with guests	21	37.5%

The data show that elderly employees still see **service skills** as their strongest and most essential competency (80.3%). However, a large majority (69.6%) also recognize the growing need for **digital tools**, while more than half emphasize **equipment operation** (57.1%). Notably, over one-third (37.5%) stress the importance of **communication**

and **customer care**, reflecting a shift toward combining traditional service excellence with new technological and interpersonal skills.

#### 4.4. Perceived Barriers to Digital Adaptation

When asked about challenges, elderly staff reported a combination of personal and organizational barriers.

**Table 4.** Reported Barriers to Digital Adaptation

Category	Frequency	%
Difficulty adapting to new technology	34	60.7%
Lack of formal training opportunities	31	55.4%
Fear of job loss due to automation	27	48.2%
Physical/health constraints	19	33.9%
Age-based stereotypes	15	26.8%

The most common barrier faced by elderly employees is **difficulty adapting to new technology** (60.7%), followed closely by **lack of formal training opportunities** (55.4%). Nearly half also fear **job loss due to automation** (48.2%), while over one-third

report **health constraints** (33.9%) and more than a quarter note **age-based stereotypes** (26.8%). These findings show that both skill-related and social factors play a major role in limiting digital adaptation.

#### 4.5. Motivations and Career Intentions

**Table 5.** Motivations Reported by Elderly Employees

Motivation	Illustrative Responses	Frequency	%
Social contribution	As long as We are healthy, We can contribute	37	66.1%
Passion for hospitality	Working is my passion, daily meeting with guests	30	53.6%
Financial need	Still in need of wor	26	46.4%
Health-dependent commitment	As long as I'm healthy, I will keep working	22	39.3%

Elderly employees are strongly motivated by a sense of **social contribution** (66.1%) and their **passion for hospitality work** (53.6%). Almost half also continue due to **financial need** (46.4%), while many note their willingness to stay employed as long as **health permits** (39.3%). These findings highlight that intrinsic values, alongside practical needs, drive elderly workers to remain active in the hospitality industry.

In terms of career intentions, most respondents planned to remain employed for another five years, conditional on their health status.

#### 4.6. Dissatisfaction Factors

Some employees reported dissatisfaction that could drive exit from the sector, including:

- Heavy workload (e.g., “number of rooms to be cleaned immediately”).

- Supervisory behavior (e.g., “wrong behavior of superiors”).

- Age comparisons with younger workers.

Although not universally reported, these concerns reflect the need for better workload distribution, fair treatment, and managerial sensitivity.

**Summary of Findings:** The findings highlight a paradox: elderly employees are motivated and experienced but lack digital competencies and face barriers that reduce their confidence and participation. At the same time, they express strong willingness to learn if training is accessible, respectful, and relevant.

#### 5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide new insights into the role and challenges of elderly employees in Vietnam's hospitality sector during the era of digital



transformation. While elderly workers demonstrate strong service commitment, interpersonal skills, and motivation to continue contributing, their limited digital literacy creates a significant barrier to inclusion. This paradox reflects the broader tension between traditional human capital and emerging digital requirements in service industries.

First, the results align with the **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** (Davis, 1989), confirming that perceived usefulness (PU) of digital tools is relatively high among elderly workers, as they recognize technology's role in simplifying tasks and enhancing service quality. However, perceived ease of use (PEOU) is considerably lower, due to unfamiliarity with technology and lack of structured training. This imbalance explains why elderly employees are motivated to learn but hesitant to adopt technology independently. The study extends TAM by showing that age-related factors-such as slower cognitive adaptability and digital anxiety-moderate the relationship between training and adoption, highlighting the importance of customized learning interventions.

Second, the findings resonate with **service management theory** (Parasuraman et al., 1988), which emphasizes that human interaction remains central to customer satisfaction, even in technology-driven contexts. Elderly employees' interpersonal strengths, such as empathy, patience, and cultural knowledge, continue to add value. Thus, digital transformation should not be interpreted as replacing human contributions but as integrating technology to complement them. This perspective underscores the necessity of **intergenerational collaboration**, where younger employees support digital training while learning service values from seniors, creating mutual benefits.

Third, the study has implications for **organizational culture and management practices**. Age-based stereotypes and managerial insensitivity were identified as barriers, suggesting that inclusivity requires more than technical training. Respect, recognition, and fair workload distribution are equally important. International comparisons reveal that Vietnam shares challenges common to emerging markets-such as limited training infrastructure and resource constraints-but also possesses a cultural advantage: deep-rooted respect for the elderly. Leveraging

this cultural asset could strengthen the effectiveness of training and integration programs.

Finally, these findings connect to broader debates on **sustainable workforce development**. As Vietnam's hospitality industry expands, reliance solely on young digital-native workers is neither realistic nor inclusive. Elderly employees represent a valuable but underutilized resource whose integration can enhance labor force resilience, reduce skill shortages, and promote social sustainability. This perspective aligns with global calls for **lifelong learning and active aging policies**, positioning elderly workers not as liabilities but as assets in a balanced workforce strategy.

In summary, the discussion demonstrates that digital transformation in hospitality is not solely a technological challenge but a socio-cultural one. Addressing elderly workers' barriers through tailored training, intergenerational mentoring, and inclusive management practices ensures that digital progress is matched with human warmth, thereby enhancing both service quality and workforce equity.

## 6. Conclusion and Implications

### 6.1. Conclusion

This study investigated the training and development of elderly human resources in Vietnam's hotel and restaurant industry within the context of digital transformation. Using survey data from 56 employees aged 60–65 and qualitative narratives, the research identified both the strengths and challenges of elderly workforce participation.

The findings revealed that elderly employees are motivated, loyal, and experienced, yet face significant barriers to digital adaptation. Their digital literacy is low, but their willingness to learn is high if training is tailored to their needs. Barriers include limited exposure to technology, lack of structured training opportunities, age-based stereotypes, and health-related constraints. Motivation to remain employed includes passion for service, social contribution, and financial necessity.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study applied the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to highlight the importance of perceived usefulness and ease of use in shaping elderly employees' acceptance of digital tools. It also demonstrated how

service management theory underscores the value of elderly employees' interpersonal skills in customer satisfaction. Together, these insights extend the academic discourse on digital transformation and inclusive workforce in emerging markets.

## 6.2. Practical Implications

### 6.2.1. For Hospitality Managers

- Design Elderly-Friendly Training Programs: Training should be modular, practical, and repetitive, focusing on task-specific applications such as POS or CRM basics.

- Encourage Intergenerational Mentorship: Younger staff can support elderly colleagues in digital learning, while seniors transfer service knowledge to juniors.

- Promote Respect and Equality: Managers should actively challenge age stereotypes and recognize the contributions of elderly employees.

- Offer Flexible Work Arrangements: Adjust workloads and schedules to accommodate health conditions while maximizing productivity.

### 6.2.2. For Policymakers and Industry Associations

- Provide Incentives for Inclusive Training: Government programs could subsidize digital training initiatives targeting elderly workers in SMEs.

- Develop National Lifelong Learning Frameworks: Hospitality training curricula should integrate modules specifically designed for older learners.

- Encourage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Industry associations can promote inclusivity campaigns that celebrate elderly workers as assets rather than liabilities.

## 6.3. Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides important insights, it has limitations:

- Sample Size and Scope: The survey

included only 56 participants, all based in Hanoi, HoChiMinh City, Halong and Danang which may not represent the entire country.

- Cross-Sectional Data: Findings capture a single moment in time; longitudinal studies would better reflect changes over time.

- Limited Managerial Perspectives: While elderly employees' views were central, the perspectives of HR managers and younger colleagues could enrich the analysis.

Future research should expand to other cities such as Nha Trang, Phú Quốc, and Da Lat, include a larger sample, and apply quantitative modeling (e.g., Structural Equation Modeling) to test causal relationships between digital training, TAM constructs, and performance outcomes. Comparative studies between Vietnam and other ASEAN countries would also deepen understanding of regional challenges.

## 6.4 Final Remarks

The hospitality industry is at the forefront of Vietnam's digital transformation, yet inclusivity must remain central to this process. Elderly employees represent a valuable yet underutilized resource whose experience, service orientation, and dedication can significantly enhance guest satisfaction. By investing in their training and development, businesses not only close the digital gap but also strengthen organizational culture and sustainability.

In the digital era, the motto should not be "replace the old with the new", but rather "combine experience with innovation." Elderly workers, empowered through training, can continue to play an essential role in Vietnam's hotel and restaurant sector, ensuring that technological progress is matched with human warmth and service excellence.

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