

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Expatriate managers in hospitality: A systematic literature review

Aahed Khlifat¹  | Khalid Eyoun²

¹Department of Hotel Management, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, The University of Jordan, Aqaba, Jordan

²Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business, The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan

Correspondence

Aahed Khlifat, Department of Hotel Management, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, The University of Jordan, Aqaba, 77110 Aqaba, Jordan.
Email: a.khlifat@ju.edu.jo

Abstract

This systematic review endeavors to offer a comprehensive analysis of the research on expatriate managers in the hospitality industry, elucidate contemporary issues, and identify prominent trends that are important for both researchers and practitioners. This study utilizes bibliometric and thematic analytic methodologies to trace the development of academic scholarship on expatriate managers over time, highlighting emerging themes at critical points in the literature. A review of 43 articles published between 1990 and 2023 reveals that researchers have paid disproportionate attention to issues that arise and encounter managers during their international assignments, while giving far less attention to issues related to returning home, expatriate work-life balance, family dynamics, and female expatriates. Imperative voids in the literature on hospitality expatriation are revealed and theoretical and practical consequences are advanced, including suggestions for future research and methods for improving expatriate managers' journeys in international hospitality assignments. To the best of our knowledge, this review is a groundbreaking effort in this academic field, paving the way for future studies that aim to shed light on the complex realities faced by hospitality industry expatriate managers.

KEYWORDS

adjustment, cross-cultural training, expatriate managers, hospitality, host country, systematic review

1 | INTRODUCTION

The international expansion of hospitality businesses generates quintessential questions in the realm of human resource management. Questions evolving around the pertinent selection of individuals to proficiently manage operations in newly entered markets, or when local talent is lacking, have become preeminent (Caligiuri, 2017). These concerns are further exacerbated by the unique market conditions of the international hospitality industry, cultural differences, and fluctuations in demand.

The escalating trend in international business expansion has prompted hospitality corporations to develop new strategies and protocols to facilitate the transition of their personnel worldwide. Expatriate management has emerged as a central issue in this domain,

highlighting the importance of human resource management for the success of hospitality businesses (Faeth & Kittler, 2020).

Expatriate managers are not nationals of the country in which they are working but are employed because of their outstanding management capabilities and competencies (Pine, 2000). Sending expatriates is commonly motivated by value added to organizations. Recruitment of expatriates is linked to the supervision of start-ups, management of joint ventures, transmission of corporate culture, mission and values, exploration of new markets, and cultivation of international competencies within the local workforce (McKenna & Richardson, 2007; Zhu et al., 2018).

However, international assignments represent a substantial investment for hospitality organizations, and the professional trajectories of expatriates can be jeopardized by failure to fulfill their

assignments or poor performance. This is a critical challenge for multinational hotel corporations, because it may deteriorate economic performance, drain social capital, and damage a company's reputation (Hussain & Deery, 2018).

Recent research has argued that there is an immediate need for better understanding of the myriad issues and challenges faced by expatriates (Bhatti et al., 2013). However, a comprehensive review of the existing research shows that limited evidence is dispersed regarding expatriation within the realm of the hospitality industry. This raises questions regarding the research that has already been conducted, what it has discovered, what is missing, and what needs to be further explored.

The quest to acquire nuanced insights into these questions is not merely an academic endeavor but rather a strategic necessity that has the capacity to revolutionize the paradigms of international hospitality practice and the nurturing of human capital in the industry.

The significance of this review lies in its ability to enhance the existing body of literature, which can manifest in two ways: First, while the realm of mainstream research is replete with inquiries into expatriation management across various sectors, relatively few studies have been conducted on the topic in the hospitality industry. The findings of this review will provide a reinvigorated, comprehensive understanding of the contemporary factors impacting expatriate managers in the hospitality industry, acting as a catalyst for scholars to advance their knowledge on various issues related to expatriation facets.

Second, prior studies have consistently highlighted a myriad of perplexing issues encountered by hospitality expatriate managers, including those related to expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment, skill requirements, relocation, and performance (AlMazrouei & Zacca, 2015; Hon et al., 2015). Thus, despite the untapped inclination of prominent hospitality corporations toward global expansion, limited evidence is available on such managerial concerns. The scarcity of evidence on hospitality demonstrates a genuine and escalating need for further research that contributes to our understanding of expatriate managers' issues in the hospitality field.

In the same vein, despite the pivotal significance of expatriates, there exists a notable void in the research dedicated to identifying and classifying the principal themes germane to expatriate managers in the hospitality industry. Therefore, the objective of this review is to synthesize the extant literature on expatriates' hospitality management covering a temporal range from 1990–2023.

Employing systematic methods, this review discusses key research themes, methodological patterns, and gaps within the prevailing hospitality literature. Ultimately, this review aims to unearth overlooked research avenues and delineate unequivocal directions for future research in the field of expatriate management within the international hospitality arena. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1. What are the dominant expatriate managers' topics investigated in the hospitality literature?

RQ2. What are the current research gaps related to expatriate managers in the hospitality literature?

RQ3. What avenues can be identified and proposed for advancing future research in the hospitality literature?

Addressing these questions will fill a gap in the literature by specifically focusing on the hospitality sector, which has distinct characteristics and dynamics compared to other industries. By dissecting the unique issues of the expatriate managers in hospitality, the study provides customized recommendations for managing expatriates within this specific context. Additionally, by considering the diverse talent pool within the industry and the varying job functions of expatriates, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of expatriation dynamics, enriching discussions on global talent management and organizational effectiveness within the hospitality sector. Overall, this study contributes to advancing theoretical frameworks and practical implications for expatriate management in the dynamic landscape of the hospitality industry.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Expatriation: Conceptual foundation

The academic literature's conceptual framing of 'expatriate' and 'expatriation' is far from homogeneous, creating obstacles for a cohesive analysis (Doherty, 2013). Conventional definitions have constantly focused on individuals who are sent abroad for temporary assignments by their organizations and sometimes marginalize varied forms of expatriation (Chiang et al., 2018). The lack of an amalgamated definition of 'expatriate' and 'expatriation' has led to varying interpretations and application of these terms across the literature (McNulty & Brewster, 2017).

Expatriation encompasses a multilayered process in which individuals, often referred to as expatriates, traverse a wide-ranging array of cultural, social, and professional settings. This practice is driven by a myriad of factors, including the pursuit of market opportunities, knowledge transfer, talent development, and organizational expansion strategies (Lee, 2015).

However, the concept of expatriation is not confined to physical relocation but also extends to the psychological and socio-cultural adjustments that are indispensable for successful functioning and performance in the foreign environment (Min et al., 2013).

Beyond its logistical aspects, expatriation embodies complex socio-psychological dimensions, encompassing issues of identity, cultural adaptation, and cross-cultural communication. As individuals embark on expatriate assignments, they are confronted with the challenge of bridging cultural divides, reconciling cultural differences, and building effective working relationships with colleagues, clients, and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds (Li et al., 2022). These human resources, known as expatriates, play a crucial role in

facilitating international business activities, bridging cultural gaps, and ensuring the smooth functioning of operations across borders. Therefore, expatriation requires careful selection, training, and support to navigate the challenges of cultural adaptation, language barriers, and differences in business practices (Causin & Ayoun, 2011).

Likewise, expatriation involves a process of self-discovery and transformation as individuals grapple with questions of belonging, authenticity, and professional identity in the context of global mobility (Marschall, 2017). Understanding the core concept of expatriation necessitates an exploration of these multifaceted dimensions, recognizing the interplay between individual experiences, organizational strategies, and socio-cultural contexts in shaping the dynamics of international assignments (Min et al., 2013).

Reflecting on this notion, prior hospitality research has delved into numerous facets of expatriates' journey, exploring the challenges, opportunities, and impacts on both individuals and organizations, laying a robust foundation for understanding this complex phenomenon (Causin & Ngwenya, 2015; Hu et al., 2002). Through empirical investigations and theoretical inquiries, researchers have touched upon the complexities inherent in international assignments, in attempts to offer valuable insights into the mechanisms driving expatriate success, retention, and organizational effectiveness.

2.2 | Hospitality expatriate managers

International expansion brings many confounding problems to hotel chains in the management of their human resources, the most fundamental of which is the necessity of recruiting technically competent and culturally sensitive personnel for managerial operations of overseas properties (Lee et al., 2021).

The physical movement of competent hotel managers from their home countries to other countries in business assignments has created a class of international hospitality professionals who are recognized as expatriate managers (Yu & Huat, 1995). These managers are responsible for fulfilling the international expansion objectives of their organizations and maintaining management standards in overseas operations.

Despite the recognized roles that expatriate hotel managers play in foreign operations, many executives have given marginal consideration to these issues in the hospitality industry or even the possible contribution they make to the overall performance of their organizations (Causin & Ngwenya, 2015).

However, research has reported that the preponderance of hotel expatriates quits foreign assignments because of their inability to adjust to the foreign country's work and life conditions (Puck et al., 2008). Thus, the effectiveness of hospitality expatriation strategies, expatriate recruitment, and cross-cultural training has been questioned by a substantial body of research (Hu et al., 2002; Min et al., 2013).

Expatriate managers in the hospitality industry are constantly required to navigate a complex and ever-changing landscape characterized by unique challenges and promising opportunities. Within the

hospitality domain, which is fundamentally global and culturally diverse, managers are confronted with a multitude of operational, strategic, and human resource complexities (Harzing & Christensen, 2004). One of the crucial elements of their role is the reconciliation of distinct cultural norms and expectations to provide outstanding customer experiences, which is the critical pillar of the hospitality industry (Doherty, 2013). The scholarly discourse surrounding hospitality expatriate managers offers profound insights into their experiences, elucidating the adaptive strategies they employ; the impact of cultural differences on their perceptions, performance, and intentions; and the ramifications of their role in organizational success (Lauring et al., 2014).

2.3 | Hospitality expatriate managers research

Since the emergence of the first hospitality expatriate manager's study in 1995, the principal impetus for expatriates' research has steadily been to assist international hospitality corporations in addressing the concerns and managing the challenges that influence and shape expatriate managers' experiences in foreign assignments (McNulty & Selmer, 2017).

Throughout this period, hospitality researchers have examined a wide range of topics related to expatriate managers' journey, including recruitment (selection criteria, skills, and competencies), pre-departure issues (cross-cultural training and preparation), foreign assignment (adjustment, cultural shock, expatriates-locals' relationships), and expatriate returns (relocation challenges, adjustment, reversed culture shock, and turnover). (see Supplementary material 2).

While some recent hospitality studies have touched upon this phenomenon from different perspectives, the majority of current research has predominantly focused on the challenges that hospitality managers encounter during their overseas assignments. This body of literature examines the complex interchange between variables that define research and practice on the vital dynamics of power (i.e., expatriate adjustment) and vulnerabilities (i.e., expatriate failure) in expatriate experience.

Although recent scholarly works on the issues of expatriates have been called for in several studies (Lee et al., 2021; Mejia et al., 2016), it is remarkably evident that the majority of research on managing expatriates has been carried out across a wide range of disciplines, with scant attention being dedicated to the issues of expatriate managers in the hospitality industry. Therefore, the current literature provides minimal insights to industry practitioners and academic researchers on the challenges impeding successful expatriation strategies, where there is still much to be investigated in depth regarding the intricacies surrounding international hospitality assignments (Causin & Ayoun, 2011).

This lack of consideration of expatriate managers' issues in the hospitality literature can be ascribed to the methodological challenges inherent in this domain of research. Specifically, the frequent mobilization and innately demanding nature of expatriate managers' roles render accessibility to these professionals by hospitality researchers.

Nonetheless, the difficulties of the research methodology, according to Takeuchi et al. (2021), should not deter academics from delving into issues germane to expatriation. Bearing that notion, it is advocated that the scrutiny of expatriate manager's research in the hospitality literature should provide research possibilities to further our understanding of this phenomenon in the hospitality industry.

2.4 | Importance of expatriates' managers

Sending managers across boundaries is one of the most effective strategies used by international hospitality organizations to build globally competent leaders and gain competitive advantage in foreign markets (Chang & Ma, 2015; Situmorang & Japutra, 2019). From an organizational standpoint, international chains exercise overseas assignments for a number of strategic objectives ranging from improving managers' general leadership skills and intercultural competencies to transmitting and disseminating organizational knowledge.

The prevailing scholarly discourse delineates three primary causes that drive international hospitality organizations to send their managers to assignments abroad. (1) Technical competence, (2) management development, and (3) control and coordination (Matić et al., 2016).

First, the rationale behind sending expatriates abroad for technical competence is rooted in the strategic imperative to bridge skill gaps and ensure operational excellence in foreign markets. In the hospitality industry, where standards of service and operational efficiency are vital, organizations often face challenges in finding local talents with the requisite expertise and qualifications (Matić et al., 2016; Situmorang & Japutra, 2019). Expatriates, equipped with specialized knowledge and technical skills, serve as invaluable assets in maintaining quality standards and driving innovation in diverse cultural contexts. By deploying expatriates to countries where local talent is scarce, international hospitality organizations can mitigate operational risks, maintain brand consistency, and capitalize on emerging market opportunities (Lee et al., 2021).

The second reason lies in the practice of improving expatriates' general management skills and intercultural competencies. Sending managers abroad for management development purposes reflects a strategic investment in human capital and leadership succession planning (Situmorang & Japutra, 2019). Experiential learning through international assignments offers managers a unique opportunity to broaden their horizons, enhance their managerial expertise, and cultivate cross-cultural competencies (Hu et al., 2002). Exposure to diverse business practices, cultural norms, and market dynamics fosters a global mindset among managers, equipping them with the agility and adaptability required to navigate the complexities of an increasingly interconnected world. Moreover, international experiences serve as a catalyst for personal and professional growth, enabling managers to expand their networks, gain valuable insights, and develop a nuanced understanding of global business dynamics (Min et al., 2013). Thus, by nurturing talent through international assignments, organizations not only develop globally-minded leaders but also strengthen their competitive position in the vibrant hospitality industry.

The third advantage of employing expatriate managers is their tighter control over international activities and effective coordination between home and host organizations. Since expatriates are generally better conversant with the core business of their corporations than local nationals, they tend to make communications and coordination more effective (Magnini, 2009). As the hospitality industry grows increasingly globalized, the role of expatriate managers remains a priority, especially in terms of their contributions to hotel chains' long-term growth and competitive advantage.

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | The scope of the study

While this review underlines the need to integrate organizational views and human resource management (HRM) research to comprehend expatriation in the international hospitality industry, it is critical to define the scope of this systematic analysis. This review aims to investigate the contemporary state of research on expatriate managers in the international hospitality industry rather than how organizations manage their expatriation process. As a result, the scope was purposefully limited to provide an inclusive analysis of a realm of the literature that has received less attention compared to broader organizational or HRM viewpoints.

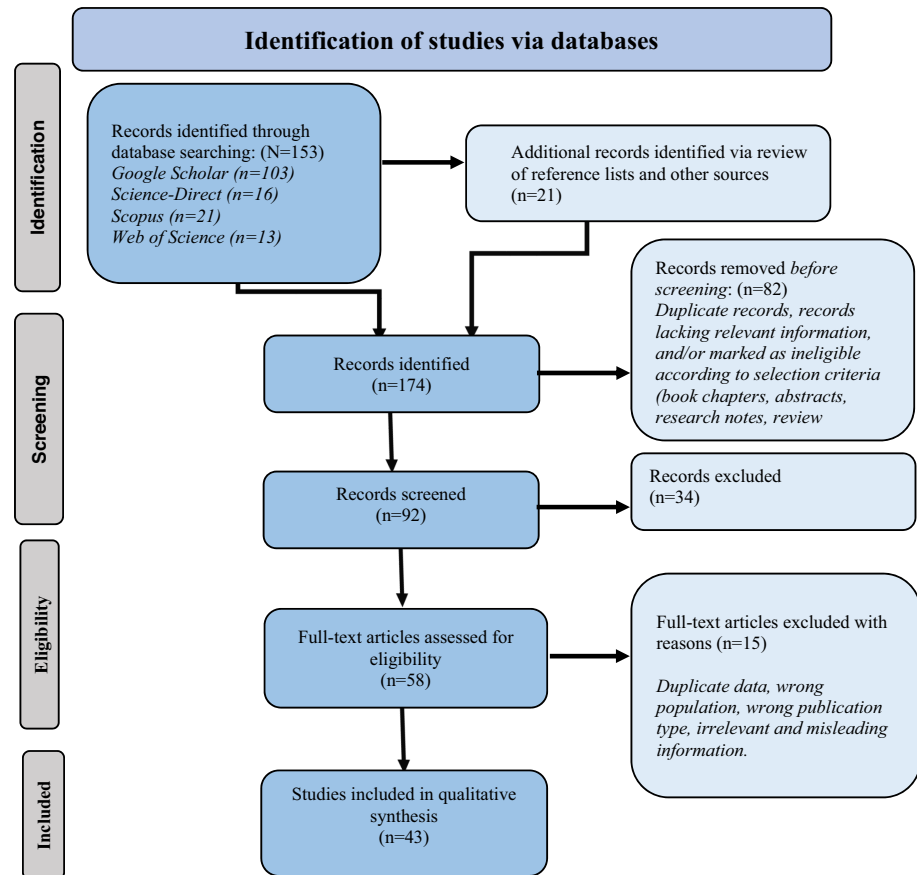
The intended exclusion of studies that took an organizational perspective on expatriation is not an oversight but rather a methodological decision. This study seeks to address a void in the current literature by focusing on the experiences, challenges, and concerns of expatriate hospitality managers. The purpose is to provide insights that are directly applicable to individuals who have experienced expatriates. Although it is understood that the views of International Human Resource Management (IHRM) and Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) can provide useful insights, their inclusion in this review may dilute its emphasis and perhaps overshadow the issues and experiences of hospitality expatriate managers, who constitute the core concern of this review.

3.2 | Search strategy and data sources

This review is based on the relevant criteria of Moher et al. (2009) PRISMA checklist to scrutinize peer-reviewed journal articles on topics related to expatriate managers in the hospitality and mainstream literature up to January 2023. The search encompassed four electronic databases: *Google Scholar*, *Scopus*, *Science-Direct*, and *Web of Science*.

A systematic search strategy for the relevant studies began by the key terms related to the research topic, such as "international manager," "expatriation" "expatriate managers," cross cultural training, culture shock, "international human resource manager," and "repatriation" in keywords and abstracts. The search was then narrowed down by "expatriation management in hospitality" in abstracts, keywords, or full text.

FIGURE 1 PRISMA flow diagram.



Given the interdisciplinary nature of hospitality research, we followed Jones and Gatrell (2014) recommendation to incorporate relevant research published in other disciplines and ensure that all essential aspects connected to the focus subject are covered. Therefore, this review was not limited to hospitality journals, and all journals in the English language were considered relevant to this study.

The initial search yielded 153 unique hits from *Google Scholar* ($n = 103$), *Scopus* ($n = 21$), *Science-Direct* ($n = 16$), and *Web of Science* ($n = 13$) databases. Furthermore, a reference list search has provided additional papers (21). An online search was performed between January 1st and December 31st, 2022. (Figure 1) envisages the full process by which the standard PRISMA flow chart was utilized to explain the systematic selection of papers for inclusion in this review.

3.3 | Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria for this review were carefully defined to ensure focused and comprehensive analysis. Studies eligible for inclusion were those published between January 1990 and December 31, 2022, that specifically focused on expatriate managers' issues within the hospitality industry. In addition, only full-text studies published in English and peer-reviewed journals were considered. It is important to note that studies identified as systematic reviews were excluded from this review to avoid redundancy and ensure the primary research focus.

Additionally, research notes, editorials, opinion pieces, theses, book reviews, and conference abstracts were excluded because of their limited contributions. Further, research focused on immigrant workers or other forms of international assignments such as inpatriation, commute assignments, and frequent international flyers were also excluded.

3.4 | Coding procedure

Building on Chang et al. (2019), the literature synthesis method, all papers were coded and classified into seven key components:

1. Journal
2. Year of publication
3. Research topic
4. Country(ies) studied
5. Stage of the international assignment
6. Method (i.e. methodological approach, sample and analysis)
7. Key findings

3.5 | Screening for eligibility

The first screening process began by reviewing all titles and abstracts using predefined inclusion criteria. The second reviewer examined

25% of titles and abstracts. Any inconsistencies between the reviewers were addressed, and a compromise was obtained in all instances. All papers that passed the first stage of screening were subjected to full-text screening based on the inclusion criteria. The initial search returned (92) potentially relevant articles. Based on a review of abstracts, (34) of which were excluded from the review mostly because they were not directly related to hospitality expatriate managers. Accordingly, the total number of articles being undertaken is (43).

3.6 | Data extraction and synthesis

Data extraction was based on a predetermined set of parameters designed by the authors to include the quality and focus of the study, sample, study designs, methods, key findings, and conclusions. To be considered a qualified complete research article, papers were assessed according to the following criteria: the aim, scope, field, and objectives of the study, sample suitability to the topic of expatriation, and methodological significance of the studies.

3.7 | Search outcomes

After excluding duplicates, the remaining (43) papers were subjected to full-text assessment in terms of focus, year of publication, methodology, and regional focus. Afterwards, content analysis was conducted to identify themes on the progress of expatriate managers' research in the hospitality context and to identify the current shortcomings in the literature.

3.8 | Data analysis

Upon completion of the collection process, bibliometric and thematic analyses were performed to ensure the full synthesis of the existing research evidence. The former aimed to explore the development and influence of publications on hospitality expatriate managers using quantitative methods, while the latter sought to identify, analyze, and report themes within the dataset to address the research questions.

For the *Bibliometric analysis*, each article was analyzed based on journal outlets, citation indices, keyword co-occurrence, methods, regional focus, and theoretical framework. For the *Thematic analysis*, the main themes were extracted and grouped according to the general expatriation process that evolved around the four stages illustrated in (Figure 2): expatriates' recruitment and selection, pre-assignment preparation, issues during the foreign assignment, and return to the home country.

4 | BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

4.1 | Journal outlets

Our analysis indicated that the reviewed papers were published in 20 different journals, including four of the top hospitality journals

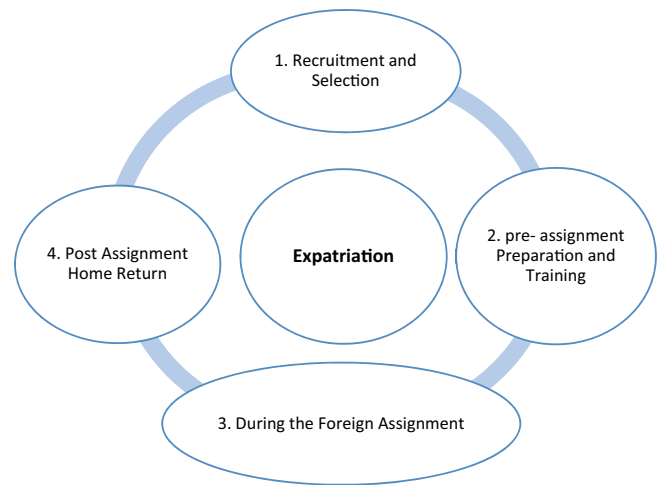


FIGURE 2 Stages of the Expatriation Process.

ranked by Gursoy and Sandstrom (2016). (Figure 3) illustrates that the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* published the highest number of articles, 11 (25.6%); *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* was the second most popular channel published in 7 (16.3%) papers, followed by *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism* published 4 (9.3%) and *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* published 3 (7%).

4.2 | Study impact

Citation indexes quantify the frequency with which a paper is referenced over a particular period of time. That is, the more frequently a paper is referenced, the more significant its influence in the field, and hence, the better the quality of the paper. Using Google Scholar, the total number of citations for each paper was retrieved by the end of 2022. Therefore, any additional citations supplemented after that date were disregarded. Supplementary material 1 shows the top 10 highly cited articles per year until January 1st, 2023.

Our analysis followed Kim et al. (2018) approach of citation calculation, which dictates that while older papers might have more citation opportunities than newer ones, recent research could have fewer citations overall. To address this concern, the total number of months since the paper was published was calculated using the equation from the publication date to January 1st, 2023. Thus, citations per year were calculated as follows:

$$\text{Citation/year} = \frac{\text{Total citation counts} \times 12}{\text{Total months since published}}$$

4.3 | Keyword co-occurrence

Authors' keywords provide substantial indicators of the scholarly content of papers. Therefore, keyword co-occurrence analysis can effectively reveal theme components and the scope of literature examined in specific research fields (Strozzi et al., 2017). (Figure 4) presents the

FIGURE 3 Distribution of journals in which papers were published.



FIGURE 4 Topics keyword co-occurrence word cloud of papers published on hospitality expatriate managers literature (*The larger the font size, the more articles that mention this topic*).

word cloud showing the most frequently occurring keywords in hospitality expatriation research.

4.4 | Methodological patterns

To achieve a comprehensive overview of the recent methodological advancements in hospitality expatriate managers' research, (Table 1) envisages the research approach, design, and data collection methods in the reviewed papers. Empirical and conceptual approaches were the basic categorization criteria; among the (43) reviewed articles, empirically designed studies have mounted (40, 93%) and only (3, 7%) adapted conceptual approaches. Furthermore, quantitative methodologies dominated the vast majority of the papers (32, 80%), which corresponds with

TABLE 1 Hospitality expatriate managers research by methods used.

Coding field	Category	n	(%)
Type of study	Conceptual	3	7
	Empirical	40	93
Research design	Quantitative	32	80
	Qualitative	7	17.5
	Mixed-Methods	1	2.5
Data collection	Questionnaires	32	80
	Interviews	7	17.5
	Mixed	1	2.5

previous findings of review studies in the hospitality literature (e.g., Gross et al., 2013; Law et al., 2020).

Questionnaire surveys were the most common data collection method (32, 80%), followed by in-depth interviews (7, 17.5%). Qualitative data collection methods are not commonly practiced in hospitality expatriation research, which can be attributed to the difficulty of meeting expatriate managers owing to their heavy workloads and demands, versatile responsibilities, and frequent relocation.

In terms of statistical techniques, multiple counts of one paper were used because more than one data analysis technique is commonly used in academic research. As depicted in (Table 2) the most popular analysis technique was regression (10), followed by factor analysis, structural equation modeling, and descriptive statistics with (8) papers each.

4.5 | Sample characteristics

Based on the focus of the studies and the background characteristics of the sample, different types of research participants were defined in this analysis. The sample type distribution, average sample size, and response rate (RR) for the 40 empirical studies are listed in (Table 3). These studies have been classified based on the

TABLE 2 Hospitality expatriate managers research by data analysis techniques.

Statistical techniques	Category	n	(%)
Multivariate statistics	Regression	10	19%
	Factor analysis	8	15%
	Structural equation modeling	8	15%
	Discriminant analysis	1	2%
Univariate statistics	Anova	5	9%
	Chi-square	3	6%
	T-test	2	4%
	Cross-tabulation	1	2%
Descriptive statistics	Descriptive	8	13%
	Correlations	7	13%
	Canonical Correlation	1	2%
Total		53	100%

target sample for each paper, which resulted in six categories: expatriates (19), expatriates and host country nationals (8), host country nationals (HCNs) (6), stakeholders (4), students (2), expatriates, and stakeholders (1).

Most of the reviewed studies were conducted using samples of managers and employees in the lodging industry. The analysis indicated a lack of studies in other segments of the hospitality industry, such as food service providers, transportation, recreation, and entertainment facilities.

To grasp the average sample size of the (19) expatriates focused studies, four qualitative papers were excluded, and the average sample size for the left (15) papers was (130) respondents. Our analysis revealed that a relatively small sample size is a common phenomenon in hospitality expatriate managers research.

4.6 | Response rate

Response rate (RR) is commonly used as the primary measure of the quality and validity of data collected through surveys and questionnaires. To gain comprehensive perspectives on RRs in hospitality expatriation research, we calculated the average RRs of all quantitative studies based on the target sample of each study. Five studies failed to indicate their RR or supplement data to calculate the RR, that is, (a 100 times) the number of surveys returned to the number of surveys distributed. Supplementary [Material 2](#) indicates that RRs are considerably low for the majority of the reviewed papers, especially when the target sample was expatriate managers.

4.7 | Theories applied

While most publications in this review did not use any theory to build their conceptual framework, the current analysis revealed that only

(six) theories were exploited in four papers ($n = 4$, 10%). These theories are primarily based on foci, expatriate adjustment, equity and justice, and willingness for future assignments. Interestingly, several studies have alluded to a number of theories without systematically utilizing them to develop their theoretical framework.

4.8 | Geographical distribution

As regional differences are distinguishing features that merit expatriate managers' issues, practices, and operations, the analysis of geographical coverage and sample source is deemed critical for our analysis. (Figure 5) presents a glimpse of the geographical focus of the articles reviewed.

On the intercontinental scale, Asia was the most commonly studied region (19 = 47.5%). It is worth pointing out that China received the most scholarly attention regarding hospitality expatriate managers' research in Asia (12, 30%). While a significant number of papers have been globally focused (11, 28%), regional and two-country comparisons scored five papers (13%). The United States and Malaysia ranked fourth, with two papers each.

5 | RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

To answer the first research question, the identification of the topical area for each paper was based on expatriation stages. Apart from one article, one main topic was identified for each paper, with a critical analysis of its focus, content, and key findings. Each paper was classified into one of four stages that subscribed to the expatriation process: 1. Recruitment and selection, and 2. Preparation and training, 3. During the foreign assignments; 4. Post-assignment home-country return. For each stage, sub-topics were extracted and synthesized based on past writings and content analyses (Leung et al., 2011).

5.1 | Selection criteria and expatriate attributes

Selecting ideal candidates for foreign positions is undeniably the cornerstone of the success of any international assignment. An observation evident in the reviewed literature is the recurring attempts to establish a universally applicable set of expatriates' attributes (Causin et al., 2011). Contrary to the notion of unified global competencies, research has reported that different regions of the world and expatriate assignments may require different sets of personal characteristics than others, as the vibrant context of the international hospitality industry has derived the need for different requirements to develop international managers.

In the dynamic field of international hospitality, expatriate managers' success centers meaningfully on a myriad of attributes identified in the existing literature. These attributes are categorized into three primary venues: personal competencies, global management skills, and adjustment characteristics, each of which plays an

TABLE 3 Study populations, sample size and response rates.

Sample	n	Counted	(%)	Average SS	Average RR
1 Expats	19	15	47.5	130	40%
2 Expats & Host-country nationals	8	6	20	Expats 232 Stakeholders 402	75% 63%
3 Host-country nationals	6	5	15	235	85%
4 Stakeholders	4	1	10	Qualitative	Qualitative
5 Students	2	2	5	531	72%
6 Expatriates & Head Quarter Managers (HQM)	1	1	2.5	Expats 187 HQM 36	60% 66%
Total	40		100%		

Note: See Supplementary material files for further details.

Abbreviations: SS, sample size; RR, response rate.

FIGURE 5 Distribution of hospitality expatriate managers research by Region/Country.

indispensable role in enhancing managerial excellence in diverse international settings (Ozdemir & Cizel, 2007).

First, expatriate managers gain significant benefits from their *personal attributes*, which include a range of personal characteristics, such as traits, attitudes, cultural awareness, and knowledge and skills. These attributes are particularly crucial considering the distinct challenges they face when operating in foreign environments, as they empower managers to decipher and maneuver through diverse business practices, norms, and market dynamics. Consequently, this facilitates decision-making that harmonizes with the specific local circumstances while upholding organizational objectives (Situmorang & Japutra, 2019; Tran, 2015). Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that the incorporation of cultural awareness and adaptability into the repertoire of an expatriate manager plays a pivotal role in fostering favorable perceptions and embracing behavior from the host community. This, in turn, facilitates the formation of a harmonious environment, which is advantageous for cooperation and the establishment of mutual respect. The cultivation of diverse competencies

undoubtedly plays a pivotal role in the effective execution of tasks, attainment of organizational objectives, and the individual's holistic development as a manager within the international hospitality context.

Second, *global management skills* incorporate attributes such as expatriates' ability to work cohesively in international teams, international marketing, negotiation skills, language proficiency, and coordination of the budgeting process between foreign operational headquarters. These attributes are indispensable for understanding international finance and skillful navigation of diverse business systems across borders. The attributes identified in this review synergistically enhance the efficiency of hospitality expatriate managers, ensuring their success in the ever-evolving global hospitality industry.

Third, expatriates' *adjustment characteristics* of emotional stability, stable personal life, resilience, resourcefulness, optimism, energy, adaptability to new environment settings, honesty, and integrity (Causin & Ayoun, 2011). Such qualities play a crucial role in equipping managers with the necessary tools to thrive in a multitude of

environments and navigate the challenges posed by international assignments with ease. Thereby, it serves to optimize not only their expatriates' well-being but also substantially contributes to the achievement of organizational goals. In conclusion, given the diverse challenges and demands of each assignment, it is imperative to meticulously match each expatriate to a specific assignment and to consider the unique needs of each individual within the framework of the host country context.

Moreover, at this level of analysis, it is critical to differentiate between the selection made by parent companies planning to send their managers abroad and the selection made by foreign companies looking for Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIEs). SIE is a widely recognized phenomenon of the global mobile workforce, which has received scant attention in hospitality literature. Among the reviewed papers, only three studies have recognized this type of expatriate in the hospitality industry. However, the current literature reveals insights into the mediating roles of host country embeddedness, the influence of cultural distance and learning orientation on work performance, along with the impact of prior international experience on cross-cultural adjustment (Haldorai et al., 2021; Lo et al., 2012; Wilson & Dutt, 2022). Remarkably, no significant differences were identified between SIEs and organizationally assigned expatriates in the various adjustment types, underscoring the nuanced complexity of expatriate assignments in the hospitality sector.

5.2 | Preparing expatriates for overseas assignments

Empirical evidence has consistently verified that managers sent to foreign countries without sufficient preparation are prone to poor performance, premature returns, turnover (Avril & Magnini, 2007), and disastrous loss of money invested in international assignments, such as lost sales, unstable corporate image, and poorly managed operations (Avril & Magnini, 2007).

With a total of 6 papers found within the category of pre-departure preparation, this theme celebrates CCT as a pivotal tool that smoothens expatriates' adjustment and develops their competencies toward outstanding overseas performance. CCT refers to the educational, affective, and behavioral competencies necessary for successful interactions in diverse cultures (Littrell et al., 2006). Given the many ways to learn about other cultures, three forms of CCT have also been identified in the current hospitality literature: a *cognitive training method* based on the exchange of information about the host culture. *affective training method* educate people on how to handle cultural situations. The *behavioral training method* aims to increase managers' capacity to switch communication styles and endure bonds with people from various cultural backgrounds.

However, the current literature demonstrates that there is no all-encompassing training program that fits all international assignments, making the content of CCT programs differ substantially based on the focus of the training, type of business, trainees, trainers, methods used in the training, and length, purpose, and country of the

assignment (Min et al., 2013). Notwithstanding, in many instances, CCT can be collapsed across three distinct yet interrelated areas; *Cross-cultural awareness training* which is also known as "cultural sensitivity" conventionally designed to foster managers' awareness of their own cultural identity, values, and beliefs, as well as being aware of, and accepting the cultures of others with positive attitudes and perspectives. *Country focused training* as another domain of training provides expatriates with the necessary information to approach the host country's norms, values, language, working and living conditions, business practices, and political and social environments. *Skill focused training* is inclusive training intended to strengthen expatriate critical skills to succeed abroad, such as communication, leadership, tolerance, flexibility, and a sense of humor (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003).

Related literature suggests that the majority of hospitality organizations searching for individuals with international competencies are usually inclined toward 'ready-made' managers over those "expensive to prepare and train" expatriates from the same organization (Selmer & Lam, 2004, p. 431). Nonetheless, with the exception of Wilson and Dutt (2022) study, which indicated no differences between the SIE and organizationally assigned expatriates' levels of adjustment, studies that compare SIEs with other types of corporate assigned expatriates within the hospitality industry are lacking in the literature.

The analysis presented herein highlights a paradox in the hospitality industry. Despite its crucial role in the success of international assignments, existing research affirms that hospitality corporations barely offer CCT to expatriates and their families, which can be ascribed in most cases to the factors of time restrictions and the associated costs of this type of training. Nonetheless, it is not yet clear whether conventional pre-departure training can endow expatriates with the required cultural cognizance (Selmer, 2001). A question that remains unanswered is which approach will be the most effective considering the specific task and cultural context in which executives will be working. (Celaya & Swift, 2006).

5.3 | During the foreign assignment

Issues, concerns, and challenges that confront hospitality expatriates during their foreign assignments have been exponentially celebrated in the literature compared with other thematic domains, with a total of (22) papers. While some studies have tackled the challenges encountered by expatriate managers, others have discussed the factors that influence expatriates' adjustment and have presented different perspectives on how hotel managers can adapt to these challenges (D'Annunzio-Green, 2002). Another stream of research has tracked the dynamics of the relationships between HCNs and expatriates in terms of compensation, HCNs' perceptions of expatriates, managerial styles, and cultural differences (Hon et al., 2015).

Expatriates' challenges: The main focus of the studies within this theme was predominantly centered on the cultural differences between home and host countries, which created barriers to accepting or succeeding in foreign assignments. The current analysis indicates that many expatriates face anxiety-provoking challenges during

foreign assignments. However, experiencing new cross-cultural situations and conditions in a new foreign environment, coupled with challenging roles and tasks, can present unpleasant surprises when expatriates' preset expectations do not align with the reality of the assignment (Naeem et al., 2015).

Cultural shock challenges attributed to local personnel issues were identified as the main source of challenges, including poor morale, excess workers, poorly trained workers, and lack of employee involvement and motivation. Likewise, the lack of local managers' competencies and support, in addition to language barriers, were reported as the most difficult management issues encountered by expatriate hotel managers (Yu & Huat, 1995).

Previous literature has also discussed legal problems that are mostly created by rapidly changing laws, uncertainty of existing laws, and deficiencies in legal systems. Moreover, communication barriers have been identified as factors that influence the quality of the relationship between expatriates and their local hosts. While it is recognized that effective communication is naturally problematic under normal settings, cross-cultural dynamics generate more instances of augmented communication difficulties. Evidently, foreign managers' insufficiency of personal communication resources in the host country culture and business environment has been identified as a principal cause of expatriates' failure in a number of studies (e.g., Magnini & Honeycutt Jr, 2003; Miao et al., 2011).

Expatriate satisfaction: Despite the significant and well-documented impact of job satisfaction on performance, organizational commitment, stress, and future intentions, expatriate satisfaction has received scant interest from hospitality researchers. However, two facets of expatriates' satisfaction have been identified in the existing hospitality literature: job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Job satisfaction refers to the "positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or experiences" (Locke, 1976), while life satisfaction relates to expatriates' general satisfaction with the living environment.

Earlier studies introduced a variety of antecedents that can reinforce hospitality expatriates' job and life satisfaction (Black & Gregersen, 1990). Job-related factors include the clarity of duties and requirements of the position, expatriates' ability to use a variety of skills in their job, level of participation in decision-making, prior international experience, and exposure to in-depth CCT. Life-related factors include linguistic ability, capacity to adjust to a new culture, spousal support, and an adequate education system (Li, 1996; Li & Tse, 1998). Recognizing and addressing these factors is imperative for fostering positive expatriate experiences and ensuring successful international assignments.

Expatriate Adjustment: Within the numerous articles found at this stage, expatriates' adjustment has flourished as a thrust area in hospitality research. Cross-cultural adjustment refers to the process by which individuals experience psychological stress relief when faced with a foreign culture. This adjustment aims to reduce expatriates' work- and life-related ambiguities, leading to improved psychological well-being and overall affluence (Min et al., 2013).

Expatriate adjustment research was fundamentally built upon Nicholson, 1984 theory of work role transitions, which links personal

and organizational adjustment outcomes with the characteristics of the person, the roles to be played, and the organization. The preponderance of studies in this domain has focused on the degree of expatriate adjustment, which is described as the extent to which expatriates are psychologically comfortable along three facets of adjustment: work, interactions, and general culture (e.g., Black & Gregersen, 1990; Wilson & Dutt, 2022). Work adjustment refers to the degree of psychological comfort with work settings, standards, management, and responsibilities in the host country; interaction adjustment refers to the degree of interpersonal communication and social contact with HCNs; and general adjustment is the degree of comfort with the foreign culture and living conditions abroad.

Delving deeper into the literature, three lines of research on expatriates' adjustment within hospitality research have been identified. The first was primarily devoted toward understanding the extent of the harmonious psychological state of expatriates toward the host countries' culture (Black & Stephens, 1989). The second strand was built upon Nicholson, 1984 work role transition theory, which accentuates how expatriates progress to fit the role needs of new international settings. Factors that contribute to expatriate adjustment within this line of research can be classified into three categories: *Organizational factors* such as decision autonomy, the purpose of the assignment (e.g., managerial development and organizational control), *social and contextual factors*, and *individuals' factors*. The third strand has evolved around facets of expatriate adjustment, such as adjustment to the workplace abroad, interaction with HCNs, and the general environment.

To alleviate the negative adversities of foreign assignments, scholarship has provided an array of different strategies to organizations and advice to individuals to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment to improve expatriates' success and performance. This includes a comprehensive selection process, the provision of pertinent training programs, and offering support during foreign assignments.

However, several antecedents of expatriate adjustment have been identified within this analysis, including job autonomy, reasons for assignment, organizational support, and HCN's support.

Job autonomy: Past studies have affirmed that expatriate managers who acquire greater decision autonomy have a high capacity to change the way they perform their jobs (work adjustment), interact with HCNs (interaction adjustment), and develop deep comprehension of the foreign country environment (general adjustment).

Reasons for assignment have also been reported as antecedents of expatriate adjustment. For instance, Shay and Baack (2004) illustrated that managerial development reasons for assignments foster hospitality expatriates' personal development (change) and role development (innovation). Personal change originates from learning gained through the reflective and self-evaluative process by which individuals modify their perspectives, beliefs, or other personal attributes (Nicholson, 1984, pp. 175). By contrast, role innovation necessitates individuals to alter their role requirements so that they can better match their needs, abilities, and identity to the tasks at hand.

Organizational support: The present review revealed that expatriates report better levels of psychological comfort when they have a strong sense of organizational support from their home organizations

(Avril & Magnini, 2007). The extent to which these managers feel their contributions are valued by their organizations, and they have input into the allocation of resources and the determination of compensation and other benefits (fringes, taxes, children's education, relocation) are examples of what is meant by "perceived organizational support."

Providing continuous support for expatriates during their international assignments has been identified as the cornerstone to the overall success of the expatriates' journey. Similarly, the absence of local management support might result in enormous difficulties for expatriate managers, including isolation and alienation, resource accessibility, and lack of feedback and guidance, which usually leads to assignment failure (Yu & Huat, 1995).

Notwithstanding, one of the most important factors that demonstrate organizational support for expatriates is developing a competitive *compensation system* which is considered a crucial factor in optimizing expatriate performance (Lowe et al., 2002). Compensation is referred to as a "bundle" of the total package of connected but separate rewards (Tornikoski, 2011). In the context of hospitality expatriation, this bundle constitutes a combination of basic salary and valued returns, such as health insurance, relocation expenses, transportation and home traveling, and family support packages.

While the current synthesis reveals that compensation packages and rewards are scarcely and superficially scrutinized, the compensation disparity between expatriates and HCNs is frequently examined. Because foreign managers from developed countries are commonly assigned senior positions in international hospitality organizations, they receive much higher compensation than their local counterparts. In the same vein, staff perception of the compensation system goes beyond the financial gains obtained from the assignment, but it can also echo their status, power, worth, and succession within the organization.

HCNs support: Based on the reviewed research, national hosts play a vital role in expatriates' effective adjustment by offering social support to the workplace. Local staff, as indicated by Mejia et al. (2016), are considered a valuable socializer and the finest source of information that assists expatriates in overcoming cross-cultural challenges and learning about their roles in the host country.

Relationship dynamics between expatriates and locals: Facets of the relationships between hospitality expatriate managers and local employees have been a significant area of focus in the literature, with nine studies employing a dyadic level of analysis to explore these dynamics. Because foreign managers are purportedly considered superior to HCNs, issues pertaining to locals' perceptions of fairness and justice have dominated the reviewed papers in this block.

Our analysis confirmed that assigning senior roles to foreign managers usually results in a large compensation gap between the two parties; expatriates are usually paid according to their home country labor market conditions, whereas locals are remunerated at local rates (Leung et al., 2011). The major constituents of expatriates' compensation include base pay, cost of living adjustments, housing and relocation allowances, educational assistance for dependents, and premium pay. However, expatriates' compensation is irrefutably complicated by the fluctuating nature of exchange rates, inflation in the host country,

challenging locations in emerging markets, variable income tax rates, and a range of new compensation practices.

The detrimental consequences of compensation disparity between expatriates and their local counterparts are key determinants of organizational behavior among HCNs. For instance, Hon et al. (2015) survey of 46 expatriates and 297 local employees in the Chinese hotel industry revealed that the perceived compensation gap is a driver of deviant interpersonal behavior among local subordinates. Therefore, addressing these discrepancies and fostering harmonious relationships between expatriates and locals are of utmost importance for the success of international hospitality assignments.

5.4 | Home country return

Surprisingly, hospitality-focused studies of post-assignments are completely silent with respect to the evaluation of expatriates' experiences, reasons for their return, and the value of the completed assignments. The issues of expatriates returning to their home countries have been overlooked in hospitality expatriation research. Among all the papers examined in this review, only one study by Feng and Pearson (1999) has partially highlighted hospitality repatriates' adjustment and home relocation challenges.

Considering the entire expatriation cycle, empirical evidence demonstrates that repatriation is more challenging for returning managers than overseas assignment itself and is often dealt with in an ad hoc manner that is occasionally managed rather than being systematically approached.

The current literature indicates that international hospitality organizations do not prioritize the reintegration process for their returnees, and that working internationally is not a guarantee of decent employment in one's home country upon returning (Kraimer et al., 2016). As a result, company-assigned expatriates reportedly have more concerns about their future home jobs than directly employed managers (self-initiated). Because managers are commonly worried about their future upon repatriation, turnover intention levels among hospitality repatriate managers are purportedly high (Magnini, 2009).

However, the reasons international hotel corporations seem indifferent to establishing practices to maintain the valuable experiences of returning managers remain unclear. From an organizational standpoint, the different changes that take place in the home country and organizations while the expatriate serves overseas hinder organizational plans for their returnees, which results in expatriates' failures in the form of premature returns, repatriates' turnover, and poor returnees' performance.

Expatriate failure usually occurs when a manager either quits or returns home before the completion of the foreign assignment. The term also refers to expatriate failure to adapt, acquire new knowledge, or achieve expected performance standards.

The current analysis indicated that international hospitality corporations, akin to numerous businesses in other sectors have observed a high failure rate among their expatriates (Ayoun et al., 2014; Hon &

Lu, 2015) representing an exorbitant issue in the industry. On the one hand, direct expenses associated with expatriates' failure include their reassignment, compensation, and relocation of the replacement. On the other hand, indirect expenses are more challenging to estimate and jeopardize business operations through waste revenue, volatile brand reputation, and mismanaged personnel (Avril & Magnini, 2007).

Although the reasons for hospitality managers' failure in foreign assignments are still blurry and undocumented, the available evidence in the current literature shows that these factors can be classified into three main categories. First, personal reasons include expatriates' inability to adapt to the new environment, closed-mindedness, a lack of willingness to learn, and a lack of technical expertise. Second, family causes include difficulties achieving acceptance and assimilation within the family. Third, organizational factors include poor selection of prospective assignees, lack of preparation and prior training activities, and lack of organizational support during foreign assignments.

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 | Conclusions

A systematic review presents the current status of the literature on hospitality expatriate managers. Our findings showed an increased popularity of this domain of research in the last few years (2015–2022), accounting for 30% of the total number of studies published since 1990. This unprecedented attention reflects the growing interest among hospitality researchers to scrutinize the never overemphasized role that human resources can play in the success of international hospitality operations.

Moreover, the findings from this analysis highlight a distinct opportunity to nurture more synergized research efforts across diverse nations and cultures, with a particular focus on the underexplored regions in Africa and the Middle East. Likewise, there is an evident necessity for research that is more rigorously grounded in theoretical frameworks and that utilizes a wide-ranging array of methodologies to yield more profound and nuanced insights. This evidence underscores the potential for advancing the scholarly understanding of hospitality expatriate managers' concerns through a more integrative and multifaceted approach to research.

Finally, conclusions drawn from prior hospitality research have limited generalizability. This limitation is attributed to the relatively modest sample sizes employed in the studies, geographical concentration of the managers surveyed, and breadth of contextual issues.

6.2 | Theoretical contribution

This systematic review sheds light on important but less frequently discussed expatriate-related issues in the hospitality literature. In the realm of scholarly inquiry, it has been customary to dissect and analyze different facets of expatriation, such as cultural adjustment, job satisfaction, and skill enhancement, as distinct factors that impact the

success of expatriates. Nevertheless, the interdependence of these variables implies that a more comprehensive and unified approach may yield a more profound understanding of the intricacies of expatriates' journeys in the international hospitality context.

A potential avenue for future research is to explore expatriate management as a multidimensional phenomenon. This entails directing attention not only toward individual factors, such as cross-cultural training, professional growth, or repatriation concerns. Instead, it is crucial to acknowledge and analyze the intricate connections and interdependencies that exist among these factors. This line of inquiry pertains to the impact of an expatriate manager's satisfaction with cultural training on their overall work performance, as well as their propensity to successfully complete their foreign assignments.

Additionally, this inquiry might delve into the role of organizational support systems within the hospitality sector, specifically focusing on mentoring programs and managers' well-being efforts and the impact of these factors on the overall achievement of expatriates. By embracing a comprehensive framework, scholars can acknowledge the symbiotic impacts of diverse influencing factors more effectively. The adoption of this approach has the potential to engender heightened efficacy and subtlety in the formulation of management strategies for international hospitality. Such an approach would enable researchers and practitioners to construct a cohesive framework for expatriate managers' success that can be effectively implemented in the hospitality industry. This will assist hospitality organizations in maximizing the acquisition, growth, and preservation of expatriates' expertise within a fiercely competitive and culturally heterogeneous hospitality environment.

6.3 | Practical implications

It is important to rethink the current strategies and practices that identify critical factors that contribute to expatriate success, and the relationships between these factors and their relative importance in contextualized country conditions. To make an effective selection decision, hospitality organizations should develop contextual procedures to measure future assignees' cross-cultural competencies (e.g., adaptation) and interpersonal characteristics (e.g., communication, leadership, and relocation readiness).

Nonetheless, to maximize the likelihood of expatriate success, it is imperative to consider candidates' families during the selection process by utilizing adaptability screening methods (e.g., level of familial bonding) to determine the appropriateness of prospective expatriates' families for foreign assignment.

Academically, hospitality institutions should encourage and prepare students for international work experiences by leveraging their competencies. This can include contextual internationalization of curriculum, participation in exchange and study abroad programs, globally oriented internships and volunteerism, cultural diversity workshops, establishing international networks with industry professionals as part of academic training, attracting experienced international students and faculty members, and encouraging them to interact professionally.

In addition, inviting hospitality expatriates and/or repatriate managers as guest speakers to share the fruits of their experiences in overseas assignments.

Moreover, hospitality organizations must develop comprehensive training programs that take place in the home country prior to the assignment, upon arrival in the host country, and during foreign assignments. Creating cross-cultural awareness is the initial stage in this process, as the increasing diversity the hospitality industry has witnessed in the last few decades in terms of ownership, workforce, and guests has necessitated employees to be aware of other people's cultures and backgrounds.

Expatriates' expectations of their forthcoming assignments need to be realistically set and carefully managed. It is crucial for hospitality organizations to clarify issues related to future expatriate roles and responsibilities, communication with home organizations, home office support and mentoring, and their status upon assignment accomplishment.

Considering the importance of supporting expatriates during their foreign assignments, hospitality organizations can advance several practical strategies to build social networks and enhance effective interactions between local nationals and expatriate assignees at different levels. This includes practices to alleviate the negative cultural perceptions of each party (e.g., stereotypes and generalizations) and establish common ground based on organizational culture, justice, and work ethics.

Checking consistently during foreign assignments is an effective method to keep up with expatriates' progress, recognize new developments in the assignment, and encounter overseas challenges as they emerge. This can be brought into existence by motivating expatriates to share their experiences with their peers on overseas assignments through social networking media, video conferences, and blogs. It is also advised that international hospitality industry magazines and newsletters highlight international hospitality personnel news and global assignments for expatriates to be disseminated. Establishing effective communication channels should help expatriates feel connected to the home organization and keep them up-to-date with home changes and not feel disconnected or isolated.

Lastly, repatriates' preparation for their home country return should be made several months in advance with a focus on identifying the newly acquired competencies and the available opportunities at home by which the optimal use of the international assignment experiences is insured. Hospitality organizations should advance strategies to mitigate the negative effects of such adversities of home country returns on returnees. Repatriation programs can be designed as part of organizational IHRM policies and procedures to address two primary issues that expatriates usually encounter upon their return: (1) career planning and (2) "reverse culture shock."

To reduce the adversities of these challenges, resources for training and well-established procedures should be developed and devoted to reorienting expatriates to their home countries in the form of repatriation training courses. The content of such courses could be advanced in consultation with the HR department, current expatriates, repatriates, their families, and course providers. Topics to be

covered include, but are not limited to, an update about the changes in the home country, changes in the business environment (policies, management, and trends), financial planning issues (taxes, insurance, pensions), family issues (education, spouse career planning, and professional updates), and effective coping strategies and support.

6.4 | Pitfalls of the expatriate managers' literature and suggestions for future research

This review aims to highlight new research directions and methodological approaches that extend and complement existing research streams rather than simply criticizing existing studies. To answer the second and third research questions, the pitfalls of existing hospitality expatriation research were addressed based on two major categories: topical flaws and mythological weaknesses that may need to be addressed in future research.

6.4.1 | Topical pitfalls

Overemphasis on Western Context: A salient drawback that is observed is the imbalanced emphasis placed on hospitality managers originating from Western cultures, particularly the United States and Europe, within the current hospitality expatriation discourse. This approach fails to acknowledge the increasing presence of expatriates originating from developing economies such as those in Asia and the Middle East, who provide distinct cultural and managerial viewpoints. The use of a Western-centric perspective restricts the extent to which the results may be generalized and increases the likelihood of perpetuating preconceptions or cultural prejudices that may not be applicable to expatriates from various backgrounds.

Other forms of international assignments: As the current hospitality literature exclusively focuses on expatriate managers, future research should investigate other growing forms of long-term assignments, such as inpatriation, third country assignments, and other alternative forms of short-term assignments, such as commuter assignments and international frequent flyers. The advantage of these assignments is that expatriates might not be required to travel for lengthy periods or acclimatize to foreign cultures to participate in international business activities.

Female expatriates: Expatriation posts are usually assigned to male managers, and as a result, research has mostly focused on male expatriates and, in some cases, their families. Thus, future research should focus on the factors that encapsulate female expatriation in the hospitality industry, why women accept or reject international assignments, the challenges they encounter, and the factors that contribute to their success and failure as they go abroad.

Limited emphasis on the repatriates' integration process: Because companies hardly address expatriate capacity to readjust, hospitality researchers' have ignored the repatriates' challenges, competencies acquired internationally, and the transformation of these competences to home organizations. This gap in the literature leaves academicians

and practitioners uncertain about how to approach this crucial phase of the expatriation cycle. However, some critical unanswered questions related to repatriation in the hospitality industry are as follows:

1. What are the challenges encountered by hospitality repatriate managers when they return to their home countries?
2. How can hospitality organizations demonstrate strategies and practices to leverage the recently acquired experiences and competencies of their repatriates?

Failure to Consider Family Dynamics: Previous research has demonstrated that family maladjustment is a detrimental factor that hinders expatriate success and performance. Regrettably, related concerns have been scarcely investigated in the hospitality literature, with the exception of one study that examined the issue as it pertains to expatriate general adjustment. This void results in a limited depiction that overlooks expatriate managers' comprehensive experience.

A comprehensive understanding of family dynamics is crucial to effectively tackle the multifaceted issues arising from dual-career challenges, work-life balance, and cultural integration that expatriate managers encounter during their assignment. This profound understanding can facilitate the creation of customized support systems and strategies, thereby optimizing the transition process, bolstering the well-being of expatriate managers and their families, and ultimately augmenting the overall success and effectiveness of assignments abroad.

6.4.2 | Methodological pitfalls

Methodology and research design: The methodological quality of a substantial portion of the extant literature is compromised by the failure to identify significant variables, the use of scales that lack reported reliability and validity, and the lack of clear sample inclusion and exclusion criteria. Additionally, the hospitality literature lacks longitudinally designed research on expatriation management. Rectifying this gap involves investigating how issues of cultural shock, adjustment, local perceptions, and expatriates' future intentions evolve over time during foreign assignments. Collecting data at different stages of assignment can contribute to a better understanding of the aforementioned issues and their trajectories.

Sample size and response rate: Previous research has shown that expatriates are elusive subjects to reach because such research samples are usually located in various geographical regions, hotel chains, and hotel types. This dilemma justifies the low number of expatriation publications on hospitality and the low response rates among these studies. However, Ali et al. (2021) found that no response rate can be expected automatically if it has a low level of accuracy, and it is further advised that researchers should detail their data collection process, the efforts practiced to increase the target sample participation, and the denominators used to calculate their response rates.

Geographical focus: Most hospitality expatriation research has been primarily focused on Asia, with a relative paucity of literature

pertaining to Africa and the Americas. Therefore, further inquiries into the challenges and practices prevalent in these regions can deepen our understanding of this phenomenon in the hospitality industry, as it is possible that these contexts differ markedly from those observed in Asian and Western countries.

Lack of theoretical grounds: This analysis revealed a dearth of theoretical underpinnings and model applications for framing hospitality expatriation research. A theoretical framework serves as a conceptual foundation for understanding, analyzing, and designing investigations that explore the relationships between the variables under consideration. However, similar to Kravariti et al. (2022) systematic analysis results, we conclude that hospitality expatriation research is theoretically immature, and the slow progress of its theoretical development is a limiting factor that hinders the advancement in this field of research.

6.5 | Limitations of the study

While the present study attempted to make significant contributions to the current literature, it was not without limitations. First, only accessible online sources were used; thus, this study may not have included all the literature published on the research topic. Second, this analysis only examined academic articles published in peer-reviewed journals found in the selected databases (*Google Scholar*, *Scopus*, *Science-Direct*, *Web of Science*, and *EBSCO*). Therefore, it excluded other sources, such as book chapters, theses and dissertations, and magazine publications. Future research that takes into account the aforementioned sources may provide deeper insights and expand the boundaries of our knowledge in the subject.

Third, articles on Africa, South America, and the Middle East are scarce in scholarly journals indexed by the aforementioned databases. Thus, the influence of region and institution on expatriation should be considered in future research. Finally, the search process has been limited to key phrases, such as, "expatriation," "international human resource management," and "repatriation." Consequently, some potential studies may have been overlooked.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

ORCID

Aahed Khlifat  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9843-6851>

REFERENCES

- Ali, F., Ciftci, O., Nanu, L., Cobanoglu, C., & Ryu, K. (2021). Response rates in hospitality research: An overview of current practice and suggestions for future research. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 62(1), 105–120.
- AlMazrouei, H., & Zacca, R. (2015). Expatriate leadership competencies and performance: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 23(3), 404–424.
- Avril, A. B., & Magnini, V. P. (2007). A holistic approach to expatriate success. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 19(1), 53–64.

- Ayoun, B., Rowe, L., & Eyoun, K. (2014). Tomorrow's hospitality leaders of America: Their willingness to accept a future expatriate assignment. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education*, 26(3), 113–124.
- Bhatti, M. A., Kaur, S., & Battour, M. M. (2013). Effects of individual characteristics on expatriates' adjustment and job performance. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 37(6), 544–563.
- Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B. (1990). Expectations, satisfaction, and intention to leave of American expatriate managers in Japan. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14(4), 485–506.
- Black, J. S., & Stephens, G. K. (1989). The influence of the spouse on American expatriate adjustment and intent to stay in Pacific rim overseas assignments. *Journal of Management*, 15(4), 529–544.
- Caligiuri, P. M. (2017). Selecting expatriates for personality characteristics: A moderating effect of personality on the relationship between host national contact and cross-cultural adjustment. In *International human resource management* (pp. 33–52). Routledge.
- Causin, G. F., & Ayoun, B. (2011). Packing for the trip: A model of competencies for successful expatriate hospitality assignment. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(4), 795–802.
- Causin, G. F., Ayoun, B., & Moreo, P. (2011). Expatriation in the hotel industry: An exploratory study of management skills and cultural training. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 23(7), 885–901.
- Causin, G. F. G., & Ngwenya, C. G. (2015). The influence of national culture and organizational culture on the success of an expatriate overseas assignment. In *Handbook of research on global hospitality and tourism management* (pp. 79–106). IGI Global.
- Celaya, L., & Swift, J. S. (2006). Pre-departure cultural training: US managers in Mexico. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 13(3), 230–243.
- Chang, C. Y., & Hwang, G. J. (2019). Trends in digital game-based learning in the mobile era: A systematic review of journal publications from 2007 to 2016. *International Journal of Mobile Learning and Organisation*, 13(1), 68–90.
- Chang, H. P., & Ma, C. C. (2015). Managing the service brand value of the hotel industry in an emerging market. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 47, 1–13.
- Chiang, F. F., van Esch, E., Birtch, T. A., & Shaffer, M. A. (2018). Repatriation: What do we know and where do we go from here. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 29(1), 188–226.
- D'Annunzio-Green, N. (2002). An examination of the organizational and cross-cultural challenges facing international hotel managers in Russia. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 14(6), 266–273.
- Doherty, N. (2013). Understanding the self-initiated expatriate: A review and directions for future research. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 15(4), 447–469.
- Faeth, P. C., & Kittler, M. G. (2020). Expatriate management in hostile environments from a multi-stakeholder perspective—a systematic review. *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research*, 8(1), 1–24.
- Feng, F., & Pearson, T. E. (1999). Hotel expatriate managers in China: Selection criteria, important skills and knowledge, repatriation concerns, and causes of failure. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 18(3), 309–321.
- Gross, M. J., Gao, H., & Huang, S. S. (2013). China hotel research: A systematic review of the English language academic literature. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 6, 68–78.
- Gursoy, D., & Sandstrom, J. K. (2016). An updated ranking of hospitality and tourism journals. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 40(1), 3–18.
- Haldorai, K., Kim, W. G., Seo, W. S., & Cai, X. (2021). Learning orientation and self-initiated expatriates' work performance: A moderated-mediation model. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102861.
- Harzing, A. W., & Christensen, C. (2004). Expatriate failure: Time to abandon the concept? *Career Development International*, 9(7), 616–626.
- Hon, A. H., & Lu, L. (2015). Are we paid to be creative? The effect of compensation gap on creativity in an expatriate context. *Journal of World Business*, 50(1), 159–167.
- Hon, A. H., Lu, L., & Chan, W. W. (2015). Does cultural value exacerbate or mitigate the effect of perceived compensation gap between locals and expatriates in the hotel industry? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 48, 83–91.
- Hu, W. T., Martin, L., & Yeh, J. M. (2002). Cross-cultural impact and learning needs for expatriate hotel employees in Taiwan lodging industry. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism*, 1(3), 31–45.
- Hussain, T., & Deery, S. (2018). Why do self-initiated expatriates quit their jobs: The role of job embeddedness and shocks in explaining turnover intentions. *International Business Review*, 27(1), 281–288.
- Jones, O., & Gatrell, C. (2014). The future of writing and reviewing for IJMR. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 16(3), 249–264.
- Kim, C. S., Bai, B. H., Kim, P. B., & Chon, K. (2018). Review of reviews: A systematic analysis of review papers in the hospitality and tourism literature. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 70, 49–58.
- Kraimer, M., Bolino, M., & Mead, B. (2016). Themes in expatriate and repatriate research over four decades: What do we know and what do we still need to learn. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 3(1), 83–109.
- Kravariti, F., Voutsina, K., Tasoulis, K., Dibia, C., & Johnston, K. (2022). Talent management in hospitality and tourism: A systematic literature review and research agenda. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 34(1), 321–360.
- Lauring, J., Selmer, J., & Jacobsen, J. K. S. (2014). Business or pleasure? Blurring relocation categories and motivation patterns among expatriates. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 14(2), 170–186.
- Law, R., Leung, D., & Chan, I. C. C. (2020). Progression and development of information and communication technology research in hospitality and tourism: A state-of-the-art review. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(2), 511–534.
- Lee, T. J. (2015). Implications of cultural differences for expatriate managers in the global hotel industry. *Tourism Analysis*, 20(4), 425–431.
- Lee, Y. K., Sinha, P. N., Kim, S. H., Swanson, E. M., Yang, J. J., & Kim, E. J. (2021). The expatriate and local hotel general managers: Differing approaches to employees' loyalty. *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, 18(10), 3394–3413.
- Leung, K., Wang, Z., & Hon, A. H. (2011). Moderating effects on the compensation gap between locals and expatriates in China: A multi-level analysis. *Journal of International Management*, 17(1), 54–67.
- Li, L. (1996). Predictors of expatriate hotel manager satisfaction in Asian Pacific countries. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 15(4), 363–372.
- Li, L., & Tse, E. (1998). Antecedents and consequences of expatriate satisfaction in the Asian Pacific. *Tourism Management*, 19(2), 135–143.
- Li, Z., Mc Kercher, B., & Ren, L. (2022). Place attachment and travel among western professional expatriates. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(4), 525–535.
- Littrell, L. N., Salas, E., Hess, K. P., Paley, M., & Riedel, S. (2006). Expatriate preparation: A critical analysis of 25 years of cross-cultural training research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 5(3), 355–388.
- Lo, K. I. H., Wong, I. A., Yam, C. R., & Whitfield, R. (2012). Examining the impacts of community and organization embeddedness on self-initiated expatriates: The moderating role of expatriate-dominated private sector. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(20), 4211–4230.
- Locke, E. A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 360–580). Rand McNally.

- Lowe, K. B., Milliman, J., De Cieri, H., & Dowling, P. J. (2002). International compensation practices: A ten-country comparative analysis. *Human Resource Management, 41*(1), 45–66.
- Magnini, V. P. (2009). An exploratory investigation of the real-time training modes used by hotel expatriates. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 28*(4), 513–518.
- Magnini, V. P., & Honeycutt, E. D., Jr. (2003). Learning orientation and the hotel expatriate manager experience. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 22*(3), 267–280.
- Marschall, S. (2017). Migrants on home visits: Memory, identity and a shifting sense of self. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 19*(2), 214–222.
- Matić, M., Vojinić, P., & Bečić, M. (2016). Differences between domestic and expatriate managers in the Croatian hospitality industry. *Economic Research-Ekonomska istraživanja, 29*(1), 131–139.
- McKenna, S., & Richardson, J. (2007). The increasing complexity of the internationally mobile professional: Issues for research and practice. *Cross Cultural Management, 14*(4), 307–320.
- McNulty, Y., & Brewster, C. (2017). The concept of business expatriates. In *Research handbook of expatriates* (pp. 21–60). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- McNulty, Y., & Selmer, J. (2017). *Research handbook of expatriates*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Mejia, C., Aday, J. B., Phelan, K. V., & Yi, X. (2016). Subordinates' perceptions of Western expatriate hotel managers in China: The effects of conflict avoidance. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism, 15*(4), 388–415.
- Miao, L., Adler, H., & Xu, X. (2011). A stakeholder approach to expatriate management: Perceptions of hotel expatriate managers in China. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 30*(3), 530–541.
- Min, H., Magnini, V. P., & Singal, M. (2013). Perceived corporate training investment as a driver of expatriate adjustment. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 25*(5), 740–759.
- Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., Altman, D. G., & PRISMA Group. (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: The PRISMA statement. *Annals of Internal Medicine, 151*(4), 264–269.
- Naeem, A., Nadeem, A. B., & Khan, I. U. (2015). Culture shock and its effects on expatriates. *Global Advanced Research Journal of Management and Business Studies, 4*(6), 248–258.
- Nicholson, N. (1984). A theory of work role transitions. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 29*(2), 172–191.
- Ozdemir, B., & Cizel, R. B. (2007). International hotel manager as an emerging concept: A review of expatriate management literature and a model proposal. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 14*(2), 170–187.
- Pine, R. (2000). Definition of 'expatriate'. In J. Jafari (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of tourism* (pp. 214–215). Routledge.
- Puck, J. F., Kittler, M. G., & Wright, C. (2008). Does it really work? Re-assessing the impact of pre-departure cross-cultural training on expatriate adjustment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 19*(12), 2182–2197.
- Schneider, S. C., & Barsoux, J. L. (2003). *Managing across cultures*. Pearson Education.
- Selmer, J. (2001). The preference for predeparture or postarrival cross-cultural training: An exploratory approach. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 16*(1), 50–58.
- Selmer, J., & Lam, H. (2004). "Third-culture kids": Future business expatriates. *Personnel Review, 33*(1), 110–124.
- Shay, J. P., & Baack, S. A. (2004). Expatriate assignment, adjustment and effectiveness: An empirical examination of the big picture. *Journal of International Business Studies, 35*(3), 216–232.
- Situmorang, R., & Japutra, A. (2019). Foreign versus local managers: Finding the perfect leaders for multinational hotel subsidiaries. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 78*, 68–77.
- Strozzi, F., Colicchia, C., Creazza, A., & Noè, C. (2017). Literature review on the 'smart factory' concept using bibliometric tools. *International Journal of Production Research, 55*(22), 6572–6591.
- Takeuchi, R., Qian, C., Chen, J., & Shay, J. P. (2021). Moderating effects of decision autonomy and culture novelty on the relationship between expatriate manager leadership styles and host country managers' job satisfaction: Evidence from the global hotel industry. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management, 21*(2), 285–305.
- Tornikoski, C. (2011). Fostering expatriate affective commitment: A total reward perspective. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal, 18*(2), 214–236.
- Tran, B. (2015). Expatriate selection and retention: Identifying and assessing the other characteristics beyond knowledge, skills, and abilities. In *Handbook of research on global hospitality and tourism management* (pp. 468–492). IGI Global.
- Wilson, M., & Dutt, C. S. (2022). Expatriate adjustment in hotels in Dubai, UAE. *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism, 21*(1), 1–19.
- Yu, L., & Huat, G. S. (1995). Perceptions of management difficulty factors by expatriate hotel professionals in China. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 14*(3–4), 375–388.
- Zhu, C. J., De Cieri, H., Fan, D., & Mike Zhang, M. (2018). Expatriate management in emerging market multinational enterprises (EMNEs): Reflection and future research agenda. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 29*(11), 1787–1798.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

How to cite this article: Khliefat, A., & Eyoum, K. (2024). Expatriate managers in hospitality: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 26*(3), e2649. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2649>