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Title: Impact of performance-based incentive systems for elevating staff engagement in the UK: A case study of Hilton Croydon Hotel

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Declaration

I have not used any AI tools for the research and completion of the project.

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Acknowledgement

I am thankful to all my tutors and supervisor for their relentless support that enabled me to be on the right track and complete the task on my own. I am also grateful to my parents and peers for constantly motivating me and without this support I might not be able to finish this colossal task within the due time.

Abstract

Background: Employee engagement and, consequently, talent retention are two of the crucial concerns in the hospitality sector of the United Kingdom (UK). It is so essentially because this industry is characterised by employee absenteeism and high turnover rate. The key proponents of this sector, including Hilton Hotels, thus attempted to leverage their reward mechanisms to ensure talent retention and employee engagement. In this context, this research has attempted to examine how the performance-based incentive system at Hilton Croydon hotel influences staff engagement. Along with assessing its key elements and how they translate into employee engagement, this project also aimed to offer solutions for the implementation challenges.

Literature review: The review of existing literature has explored various related concepts including performance-based reward system, employee retention and employee relations. It essentially highlighted that performance-based incentives typically work as extrinsic motivators and, thus, are directly related to employee engagement. However, it is not only financial in nature, as factors like opportunities for career progression or flexible working arrangements (FWAs) are also required for successfully retaining the talents. Nevertheless, though insights specific to the hospitality context are present in existing literature, reference to the UK is hardly to be found. This is the principal justification for the research project attempted here.

Methods: In one word, this project has followed the secondary qualitative method. To elaborate, it has relied on the existing repository of grey literature (e.g., annual reports, industry reports, website content of Hilton and credible blog articles) to collect the data. Furthermore, it has adopted the thematic analysis method for data collection where, briefly put, the recurring pieces of data are converted to themes and analysed accordingly. To ensure that only credible sources are incorporated into this research, selection is guided by inclusion/exclusion criteria prepared on a rigorous set of parameters.

Findings and Discussions: The principal finding of this project is that Hilton's performance-based incentive system, which includes a wide array of benefits, upskilling scopes, perks and opportunities for professional development, has been able to yield considerable employee engagement. Discussions have suggested how it is consistent with the insights offered by existing literature where financial incentives, along with scopes for

internal mobility, are considered crucial for keeping employees engaged and retaining talents. However, findings have also shown Hilton Croydon lacks adequate performance metrics that can make evaluation transparent. In this regard, the sources consulted here recommended incorporating feedback as a major solution to this.

Recommendations: Based on the findings of this research, Hilton Croydon is recommended to adopt a multi-faceted performance evaluation framework that can, briefly put, complement the essentially quantitative performance metrics with qualitative insights from peers, supervisors and other associated personnel. It is also recommended to strengthen its existing feedback systems by, for instance, introducing clearer performance expectations. Moreover, to address the difficulties of assessing individual performance in a team context, Hilton Croydon hotel is also recommended to introduce a proportional, hybrid performance assessment system founded upon peer-to-peer recognition and feedback. Furthermore, as the findings stress career development opportunities to be a major performance-based incentive, Hilton Croydon is suggested to offer further growth opportunities tailored to the specific needs of the staff.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research background and overview

The Hilton Hotel was first opened by Conrad Hilton in 1925 in Texas, United States (Hilton, no date). As a result of the founder's many years of commitment, strong leadership, and creative innovation, today, Hilton is one of the most respected hospitality brands in the world. There are also many hotels in the UK by Hilton, such as Hilton Blackpool, Hilton SLH, Hilton Rochdale, Hilton Manchester City Centre, Liverpool, Leeds, etc. (Hilton, 2025). One of them is the branch in Croydon, which is about 20 minutes away from the Victoria railway station located in London (Hilton, 2026). The Croydon Hilton hotel has exclusive rooms to accommodate families, along with offering an exclusive menu for the children. The parking lot is also present with a lot of space. A space has been allocated for just pets, drinking and dining areas, along with wellness areas. The hotel ensures that with their modern amenities and a relaxing environment, all visitors will feel a high-quality service. The number of employees in that single branch is between 100 and 200 (Studysmarter, 2026).

The Hilton hotel has a great reputation in terms of employer brand, given its emphasis on the well-being of employees and maintaining their satisfaction. This research will try to understand the performance-based incentive program that has been adopted by the Hilton Croydon hotel for increasing the workforce engagement levels. This case study research is essential because even though research has been done to understand motivation through incentives for large organisations. There are limited studies that have focused on extrinsic motivating factors, especially performance-related reward systems, for hospitality companies like Hilton. Even though there has been prior research in this subject matter, little has been done for Hilton and other hotel chains (Harris, 2021; Nkouangas, Ludmilla Yvette, 2022), as the primary focus has been on MNCs in other industries (Bartram *et al.*, 2015; Okwuise *et al.*, 2023). Further narrowing down the study to the Croydon branch will help the specific UK hospitality brand to meet the consumer trade by motivating the employees better. This not only adds to the literature gap with respect to performance-based incentive systems, but also practically contributes to the company.

1.2 Research aim and objectives

The aim of this research is *to evaluate the performance-based incentive programmes organised by the Croydon branch of the Hilton Hotel to increase workforce engagement levels among UK hotel staff.*

In order to fulfil the aim, below are a few objectives that will be addressed:

- To identify the elements involved with performance-based incentive systems that can help the British administration of Hilton develop a positive relationship with hotel workers
- To examine the implications of performance-based rewards that can help Hilton UK towards retaining majority of experienced workers from Croydon
- To analyse the challenges experienced by Hilton UK management while implementing performance-based reward systems in the existing infrastructure
- To recommend solutions for the Hilton administration for delivering quality rewards to UK hotel staff based on past performance levels.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter has conducted a detailed and critical review of prior scholarly studies related to the chosen research context of the impact of performance-based incentive systems on boosting employee engagement and retention in the UK hospitality sector. The detailed review of existing research has further enabled the identification of gaps in the current knowledge base to guide the study being undertaken towards bridging them.

2.2 Key concepts

2.2.1 Performance-based reward system

Performance-based reward is a concept that has been developed in order to recognise the efforts of employees after they successfully contribute to achieving a goal. The study by Azman and Mohd Ridwan (2017) claimed that a performance-based reward system usually holds two approaches to determine and offer rewards to employees for their skills, knowledge, or competencies used to perform their jobs. The first one is an individual reward approach that includes strategies like lump sum bonuses, merit pay, promotions, etc., while the group-based approach considers gainsharing or team-based payments. However, Sanders et al. (2018) argued that often these rewards are conducive to innovation and do not motivate employees intrinsically. Thus, this specific reward system needs a detailed investigation to ensure it successfully contributes to shaping organisational performance.

2.2.2 Employee relations and retention

Conceptually, employee relations has been identified as a core component of shaping organisational performance by many scholars. The study by Arimie and Oronsaye (2020) noted that employee relations is regarded as a conceptual notion to shape the relationship between employers and employees. Thus, effective employee relations considers prioritising the human element within an organisation to motivate employees to remain engaged for longer, which results in higher productivity. Positive employee relations, therefore, contribute to employee retention. The definition of employee retention, as per Singh (2019), is the selection of relevant measures to encourage employees to stay engaged for a longer duration.

The scholars, thus, claimed that strategic employee relations measures help reduce the tendency of talented employees to leave.

2.3 Elements of performance-based incentives to develop positive employee engagement

Research studies conducted to date on performance-based incentives have explored various elements and strategies that facilitate robust employee engagement. The study by Ogbonnaya et al. (2017), in this context, claimed that although performance-based incentive pay is regarded as a common approach, where either it is offered at an individual level by assessing the performance level of each member, or it is provided as organisation-wide incentives, considering it as profit-related payments or shared ownership. The authors, however, claimed that in each incentive scheme, the focus should remain on assessing how far they are able to shape employee well-being by evaluating the factors, like job satisfaction, trust in management, and organisational commitment, too. Contrastingly, the research conducted by Gadsden et al. (2021), Adams (2025), and Argyropoulou et al. (2023) outlined that compared to financial incentives, non-financial performance-based reward systems, such as development opportunities, are more effective in improving employee motivation. Hence, it majorly contributes to boosting the outcomes of service delivery. On a similar note, the findings by Lin et al. (2022) informed that conditions or factors under which rewards and incentives are sanctioned, specifically in the context of loss aversion, enhanced social pressure, and gain-seeking, are more effective in modifying employee behaviours related to long-term engagement. Thus, in consideration of all the reviewed scholarly studies, positive reinforcement elements or methods are vital to ensure performance-based incentives are effective enough in ensuring fruitful engagement within the workplace.

2.4 Implications of performance-based rewards in employee retention

Along with exploring the elements to curate performance-based incentive systems, scholars have also explored their implications in retaining talent. In this context, Fitri (2024) shared crucial insights by claiming that employee retention is a crucial factor to achieve an advantage in any competitive sector and here, lucrative compensation packages remain highly significant in attracting and retaining skilled talent for a long time. The findings of the aforementioned study further informed that performance-based incentives, like recognition programmes, bonuses, and even comprehensive benefits, like flexible work arrangements, career progression opportunities, etc., help foster a culture of continuous improvement and

excellence. In turn, high-performing employees feel valued and satisfied to work in an organisation with greater commitment. Similarly, Sawaneh and Kamara (2019) claimed that accurate performance reviews and salary upgradation, balanced with traditional benefits, like sick leave allowance, paid holidays, etc., also help alleviate the risks of employee turnover in an organisation. Further, Doan et al. (2025), while collecting evidence on other service sectors, including the hospitality industry, posited that performance-based bonuses have a positive impact on employee retention only when they are not generically applied. Thus, in line with these scholarly views, it can be posited that performance-based reward systems do accelerate employee retention if organisations can successfully move beyond adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

2.5 Challenges of implementing performance-based reward systems in hospitality infrastructure

The focus of scholarly works also highlights the evidence of exploring the challenges of implementing performance-based rewards. Li et al. (2023), while conducting case study-based research on the Cavendish Hotel, claimed that the ineffectiveness of the line managers is the most critical challenge in this context. The authors, by taking insights from the Expectancy theory, highlighted that setting unrealistic expectations about task performance, tremendous work pressure, and poor communication of the value of the rewards delivered often create ambiguity among employees. In such cases, employees not only feel demotivated to work with commitment but also become more focused on improving personal performance, which can distract them from the achievement of shared goals.

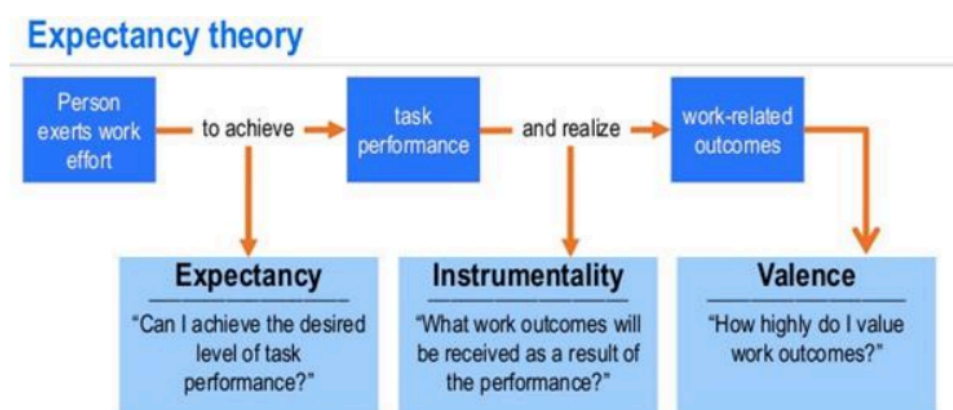


Figure 2.1: Expectancy theory assessing performance-based reward systems

(Source: Li et al., 2023)

Further, Rohim et al. (2023) conducted a survey-based study on Shangri-La Singapore and noted that the hospitality sector, being highly competitive, often fails to tailor reward packages by recognising evolving challenges that front-line and support staff face. In addition, an improper balance between monetary and non-monetary rewards, as per this study, can also affect employee engagement levels.

2.6 Strategies to offer performance-based rewards to employees

Considering the scholarly evidence of prior research works, several strategies have been identified. Reza and Neogy (2024), in this context, stressed the significance of adopting a total rewards approach by claiming it as a comprehensive method to boost employee relations by combining all aspects related to growth, comprehensive benefits, and work environment. The scholars, by taking insights from the World at Work model, noted that the reward strategy must consider five domains, i.e., benefits, career development opportunities, remuneration, work-life, and performance recognition, to effectively manage and value employee performance. Further, Khan et al. (2020) noted that the concentration of power at higher managerial levels should be distributed evenly and with transparency to ensure necessary accountability and effective performance management in reward strategy development. The findings also stressed the point that socio-cultural factors should also be assessed in the design of non-monetary rewards to facilitate a more meritocratic and transparent work environment for employees

2.7 Literature gap

The reviewed studies were highly relevant in understanding how performance-based rewards are effective in shaping employee engagement and retention in contemporary organisations. Although scholars, like Fitri (2024), Gadsden et al. (2021), Singh (2019), and others have focused on exploring the implications of performance-based rewards in the context of the service industry, very limited emphasis was there regarding the hospitality setting. Still, authors like Reza and Neogy (2024) and Khan et al. (2020) collected evidence from the hospitality sector, but these are not from the UK context, which is the core focus of this study. Hence, by collecting web-based secondary evidence on the UK hospitality industry, this study considers bridging this gap.

2.8 Chapter summary

To sum up this chapter, thus, it can be stated that prior scholars have already conducted detailed research on performance-based reward management systems and their significance on employee engagement. However, the reviewed studies have not critically focused on assessing UK-based hotels, which this study has considered as a gap for further mitigation.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Overview of case study approach

A case study approach is usually a qualitative approach and strategy, which is mainly focused on obtaining an in-depth understanding of an event, issue or phenomenon of interest in a purely natural and realistic form (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). This is an established form of research design widely used in social science and related disciplines (Priya, 2021). The main aim of a case study is to explore any phenomenon, individual, country, or event of interest in detail. This is why it has been referred to as naturalistic design, as compared to experimental (Crowe *et al.*, 2011). Here, the researcher does not control the findings, and they just gather great details of the case which they are investigating in their natural context. Here, the case study approach is adopted to get in-depth data regarding the Hilton Hotel Croydon branch; hence, this is the case. An advantage of case study methodology is that it gives the opportunity to the researcher to gather rich insights through data collection and analysis. It also offers a greater understanding between people and organisations, while expanding theories, and even allows new theories and new concepts to emerge. Apart from this, the case study method even helps in the identification of hidden aspects, through which a thorough analysis of a particular event or phenomenon is done (Simeonova and Fitzgerald, 2023). Therefore, with this approach, the investigator will be able to understand how performance-based incentive programmes within the Croydon branch of the Hilton Hotel will improve the workforce engagement levels. This may give rise to already existing ideas, or it may also reveal new insight which has not been found out prior to this. However, a major limitation of this approach is researchers' bias; the research could inject their personal opinion into the findings and analysis. Further, since this is only targeted at the case, the outcomes may not be applicable or may not be generalisable to larger populations.

3.2 Data collection method

Data was collected through a secondary qualitative data collection method. The advantages of this kind of method are that it allows for a vast range of information to be obtained without any geographic constraint or monetary limitations (Cheong *et al.*, 2023). The sources were non-academic, credible secondary sources that would be open to the public. Some of the common sources were newspapers, magazine articles, company websites, industry reports and other similar kinds. The inclusion criteria for data collection included articles that were

published since 2017, published in english and would be about the Hilton hotel. The exclusion criteria were the articles that were significantly not related to the Hilton Hotel, were published prior to 2017 and were not in English. Additionally, any information related to personal blogs or Wikipedia sources was also excluded. About 16 article sources have been collected as part of the data collection aimed at answering the questions related to the Hilton hotel.

3.3 Data analysis

The collected data were analysed through the thematic analysis approach, which is widely known for its suitable analytical tools for qualitative data (Collis and Hussey, 2014). This analytical approach offers a flexible and true approach for the identification, analysis, and reporting of recurring patterns of themes from the data (Ahmed *et al.*, 2025; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Hence, through this approach, the data collected were reviewed to find any similarities. After that, some code or keywords were attached to the patterns that recurred within the findings. Finally, themes were associated with similar patterns, which resulted in the emergence of four themes. The theme was named after the research objective.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter highlights the findings of this research. The findings are presented here by organising across themes. Afterwards, this chapter also presents discussions on the findings. To check the validity of the findings, the discussion section attempts to cross-verify them against the insights obtained through LR.

4.2 Analysis of themes

4.2.1 Theme 1: Elements of performance-based incentives at Hilton Croydon hotel

Performance-based incentives at Hilton hotels, including Croydon, essentially take the shape of employee benefits. At a glance, it is evident from these benefits that they are designed competitively i.e., consistent with industry standards. The key elements of performance-based incentives at Hilton Croydon hotel include what in Hilton's official website is called "Best-in-Class PTO" i.e., significant paid time off (PTO) (Hilton, 2022). In other words, Croydon, being a part of Hilton's hotel chain, extends compensation to employees when on vacation or unable to attend due to sickness. Another major performance-based incentive that Hilton offers across its chain is travel discount. Known as the Go Hilton Travel Discount Program, employees enjoy lucrative hotel rates under this (e.g., £30) (Hilton, 2022). It appears that discounts and perks are two of the major elements of Hilton's performance-based incentive package. For example, beyond the discounts on hotels, the team members at Hilton hotels including Croydon are eligible to get discounts on bespoke products made by brands like Tempur Sealy (a renowned manufacturer of mattresses) or Serta (Hilton, 2019). Interestingly, Hilton considers the opportunities it offers for personal and professional growth as parts of the performance-based incentives. Along with providing 'debt-free education' to its team members (thanks to its partnership with Guild Education), it also emphasises leadership development through Lead@Hilton while offering exposure to various related courses via LinkedIn Learning (Hilton, 2019). In any case, as noted above, discounts dominate the incentives offered by Hilton, which is not limited to hotel rooms or custom-made products at cheap prices but also include meals at a cheaper rate in hotels that fall under the management of Hilton (including Croydon) (Mirmotahari, 2022). Nevertheless, industry experts like Mirmotahari (2022) see health benefits offered by Hilton (e.g., tax-free

medical coverage) along with insurance benefits (e.g., temporary disability, long-term disability, accidental death) retirement benefits, childcare benefits, and different types of leaves as part of incentives extended. Stressing these, one can further reinforce the claim made about the reward mechanism at Hilton, including Croydon, as competitive. If greater staff engagement is what Hilton Croydon has strived for through what Burleigh (2024) called the “virtuous cycle of benefits,” it has indeed achieved that. According to a report in Fortune, Burleigh (2024) highlights how the 93% engagement rate across all hotels of Hilton can be attributed majorly to its incentive system. In a nutshell, it can be said that the key elements of Hilton Croydon’s performance-based incentives include discounts & perks, along with a plethora of benefits not limited to PTO and tax-free medical coverage.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Implications of performance-based rewards on employee retention

It has been already noted above that Hilton hotels, including but not limited to Croydon, have managed to achieve 93% employee engagement (antecedent to employee retention) through its elaborate spread of benefits that count for performance-based incentives (Burleigh, 2024). However, to identify how these benefits exactly manifested in greater employee engagement and retention, this relationship has to be explored critically. Now, since opportunities of professional and personal growth offered by Hilton are considered within the incentives, it must be noted that Hilton does not offer it in an undifferentiated manner. According to a report by the International Youth Foundation (IYF) on the Passport To Success (PTS) skills training program at Hilton, it has been lauded that the curriculum is based on strong assessment of skill needs among the new joiners (e.g., lack of soft skills) (IYF, 2025). In other words, due to this tailored approach, Hilton has been able to retain almost 96% of its new employees across its chain (IYF, 2025). Hence, it can be said that education-based benefits at Hilton lead to employee retention essentially due to this tailored approach. Industry experts like Bybee (2022), however, wish to read this as Hilton’s excellence in recruitment, as it always strived for talents that inherently possess consistent values. Moreover, this industry expert attributed this significant employee retention to Hilton’s recognition system. In other words, proportional acknowledgement for discretionary efforts is an integral part of Hilton’s organisational culture. It is interesting to note that, even in this case as well, Hilton adopts a data-driven approach since, according to Bybee (2022), all the people programs at Hilton are informed by the results of member surveys. It, furthermore, seems that the perception that the performance-based incentives at Hilton in general and

Croydon in specific are reducible to otherwise abundant employee benefits is flawed. The arguably best example of Hilton's performance-based incentive is its 'share-based compensation' program, as elaborated in its 2022 annual report. As part of the Hilton 2017 Omnibus Incentive Plan, employees are allowed to have performance-based shares to the restricted stock units (RSUs) of the hotel chain (Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc., 2022). The point of terming it the 'best' lies in the fact that it reveals Hilton's what Bova (2020) called "hyperfocus" to employee retention. In summary, the performance-based incentives at Hilton, which is not limited to employee benefits, translate into greater employee retention thanks essentially to the data-driven approach of incentive design.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Challenges of implementing performance-based rewards at Hilton Croydon hotel

It must be admitted beforehand that challenges of implementing performance-based rewards specific to Hilton Croydon hotel are difficult to find, as it is somewhat obvious for the organisation to entertain caution before disclosing them publicly. However, the existing repository of grey literature provides in-depth insights into the major challenges in abundance. Furthermore, though they mostly focus on generic problems, sources that delve deeper into the implementation challenges of performance-based incentives in the hospitality context are prioritised here. The recurring challenge across these sources is the challenge of measuring performance. In other words, hospitality firms across the United Kingdom (UK), including Hilton hotels, often struggle to find the most effective performance assessment tool. According to a latest blog entry by Hall (2026), the renowned, US-based business attorney, the difficulty of assessing individual performance is further intensified in a team context, especially when the hospitality industry is highly dependent on teams in case of frontline and consumer-facing tasks. This is relevant in the case of Hilton in the sense that, along with being a leading proponent in the UK's hospitality industry, majority of its benefits described above are team-based. This aspect appears to resonate strongly in employee reviews in the hospitality context where they explicitly cited the shortcomings of existing performance review systems and how they are disproportionately affected by them as far as compensation is concerned. According to a survey conducted by Shortlister, which is cited in an article by Quantum Workplace, 59% employees think that the performance reviews do not reflect their contributions in collaborative works accordingly (Quantum Workplace, 2026). Interestingly, inter alia, this challenge has been considered by industry experts and teachers like Sabio

(2024) as a major impediment in the way of implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) principles in the hospitality industry. Here, the inadequacy of performance assessment tools took the shape of the inability of defining quality i.e., coming up with quantifiable indices of quality. Though successful organisations like Hilton managed to bypass this challenge essentially by tying incentives with strategic performance (it followed an aggregated scorecard method), it cannot be considered a sustainable response to the problem of performance assessment in the hospitality industry (Johnson, 2025). In a nutshell, it seems that the implementation challenges related to performance-based incentives have more to do with the challenges of performance assessment rather than the programs themselves.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Solutions for enhancing performance-based reward systems

It is evident from the previous assessment of performance-based incentive systems at Hilton Hotels and other proponents of the hospitality industry that the core problem lies in accurate performance assessment. In this regard, the first solution is related to making the foundations of performance review systems effective. Industry reports, in this regard, have explicitly recommended benchmarking against the contemporary rates (RSM UK, 2025). Critically speaking, as shown above, the challenges stem from the difficulty of assessing individual performance in a team setting. In this regard, industry reports have stressed the importance of collaboration with department heads (e.g., verification of reviews based on which the incentives will be offered) (RSM UK, 2025). Other reports have stressed the importance of feedback systems (Epos Now, 2023). Interestingly, this proposed feedback system is helpful in both making performance reviews transparent while identifying areas of improvement within the reward systems itself. As far as enhancing the transparency of performance reviews are concerned, a peer-to-peer recognition (e.g., aspect integral to feedback) is recommended, often enabled by latest digital tools to facilitate collection of real-time insights (Epos Now, 2023). Beyond the problem of the inadequacy of existing performance management tools, Grenside (2026) highlighted that one of the drawbacks inherent to these reward systems is that it recognises efforts within work only. It is particularly visible in the context of Hilton Croydon that it ties incentives exclusively to strategic performance, as shown above (Johnson, 2025). Experts like Grenside (2026) stressed how the scope of these incentives can be extended to acknowledge employees' noble efforts outside work (also helpful for employee branding). Nevertheless, this is not to deny the importance of assessing performance based on the achievement of strategic goals. The guidelines provided by

Freedman (2025) to improve the design of incentive programs essentially highlights ‘impact on profits’ as a central metric of performance assessment. These solutions, in summary, are able to identify ways to improve existing incentive systems at Hilton hotels, along with offering insights into how to overcome difficulties in performance assessment.

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 Analysis of research findings

Theme 1: Elements of performance-based incentives at Hilton Croydon hotel

The findings related to the Hilton Croydon hotel regarding the elements of designing effective performance-based incentives share a strong similarity with the scholarly studies reviewed previously. Evidence gathered from the sources, like Hilton (2022) and Mirmotahari (2022), informed how Hilton Croydon has curated performance-based rewards based on both monetary and non-monetary strategies, like bonuses and travel discounts, with comprehensive benefits, like insurance services, paid leave facilities, etc. Lin et al. (2022) also shared similar opinions by claiming rewards if offered by aligning with social conditions and evitable gains, they boost long-term engagement. Thus, Hilton Croydon’s initiative to satisfy emerging employee needs through performance-based rewards contributes to strengthening the engagement levels of employees significantly. Hilton (2019) also shared similar evidence by highlighting the leadership development initiatives of the firm. It has been learnt from the study by Gadsden et al. (2021) that such non-financial incentives are more effective in motivating employees to stay longer. Extended studies on this context, like Singh et al. (2017), Francies et al. (2025) and Omran et al. (2021), also shared similar claims by highlighting that monetary measures, if not properly balanced with non-financial benefits, are unlikely to offer relevant effectiveness in organisational performance. Thus, the discussion, therefore, outlines that both monetary and non-monetary elements are influential in shaping the effectiveness of performance-based reward strategies in boosting positive employee relations among the UK hotel staff.

Theme 2: Implications of performance-based rewards on employee retention

The gathered secondary evidence also informed how effective performance-based rewards help Hilton Croydon to retain the majority of its skilled staff for longer. The insights from

Burleigh (2024) noted that Hilton has successfully achieved 93% of employee engagement, while from IYF (2025), it has been learnt that the organisation has retained 96% of its employees across all hotels, including Croydon. This evidence, along with the insights shared by Bybee (2022) regarding the people program of Hilton, further helps understand the credibility of its rewards systems in building transparency across the organisation and motivating staff to stay longer by satisfying their diverse needs. These findings are entirely in line with the views of Fitri (2024) and Sawaneh and Kamara (2019), where it has been marked that if high-performing employees feel valued and their efforts are recognised through different financial and non-financial benefits, the annual attrition rate goes down significantly. Further, the findings gathered from Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc. (2022) regarding the 'share-based compensation' program and Bova (2020) about the maintenance of a 'hyperfocus' on employee retention are similar to the opinion of Doan et al. (2025) related to positive tailoring of reward strategies as per the evolving organisational and employee needs. Further research on this context, like Iqbal et al. (2019), Urme (2023), and Igbinoba et al. (2022), also claimed that a balanced performance-based reward system based on financial and non-financial strategies effectively motivates employees and helps retain the skilled ones for a longer period. Thus, by analysing these pieces of evidence, it can be comprehended that organisations need to effectively design performance-based reward strategies, like Hilton Croydon, as per evolving requirements to ensure they are suitable to keep employees highly satisfied.

Theme 3: Challenges of implementing performance-based rewards at Hilton Croydon hotel

Although there has been no specific evidence of implementation challenges regarding performance-based rewards identified in the context of the Hilton Croydon hotel, general insights gathered from grey literature are also in line with the scholarly findings reviewed beforehand. Findings obtained from Hall (2026) and Quantum Workplace (2026) highlighted the issues, such as a team-based approach in reward management, reducing the scope for evaluating individual contributions or ineffective performance reviews that fail to inform about the value of specific staff. If assessed from the perspective of the Expectancy theory, as done by Li et al. (2023), such issues usually occur due to the ineffectiveness of a line manager. Evaluating both pieces of evidence, it becomes clear that the inability of the management to set proper expectations about performance-based rewards and ambiguity in valuing individual contributions pose challenges in the implementation of performance-based

rewards. The findings from Sabio (2024) also helped identify how Hilton Croydon has somehow overcome the challenge of the ineffectiveness of performance assessment tools (which is a core issue in the hospitality industry context) by combining strategic performance standards with incentive-based strategies. The evidence from Rohim et al. (2023) is entirely in line with these findings, as the authors also claimed that tailoring reward strategies as per organisational need is important to keep employees satisfied. Extended research on the studies, like Vasiliev et al. (2025), Odunayo (2022), and Arous et al. (2022), also outlined managerial responsibilities towards designing effective organisational policies to overcome the issues in the implementation of standardised performance management and reward systems. Thus, as evident in the context of the Hilton Croydon hotel as well, poor performance assessment practice of managers is the core issue in implementing effective reward systems, which has also been prioritised in scholarly studies.

Theme 4: Solutions for enhancing performance-based reward systems

In line with the identified issue of an ineffective performance assessment system, causing challenges in the reward strategies of Hilton Croydon, the solutions focused strictly on this area. The insights gathered from the sources, like RSM UK (2025), while stressed creating a performance assessment system by setting standards in line with industry benchmarks, Epos Now (2023) clarified the necessity of implementing transparent feedback systems for effective performance reviews. These findings share a similar view to the one established by Khan et al. (2020) by mentioning the need for proper power concentration at higher management levels to bring more transparency in performance assessment and the implementation of reward strategies. Further, the findings from the sources, like Grenside (2026), Johnson (2025), and Freedman (2025), highlighted how performance-assessment becomes profit-centric for most organisations, like Hilton Croydon, and reward systems recognise the effort within the work only. Hence, these findings further emphasise the need to adopt a total rewards management approach as learnt from the study by Reza and Neogy (2024) based on the World at Work model. Further studies, like Hodak et al. (2023), Tumati and Al Yousfi (2023), and Younies and Al-Tawil (2021), also appreciated the use of the total reward strategy by offering not only financial rewards like remuneration to employees, but also comprehensive benefits, recognition, and development opportunities to keep them engaged in the long-term. Thus, the analysis of these findings against scholarly studies helped explore how the existing reward strategies at the Hilton Croydon hotel can be improved

further through the enhancement of performance assessment systems and the integration of a total rewards approach.

4.3.2 Implications of findings

The generated findings and their critical discussions hold both theoretical as well as managerial implications. From a theoretical perspective, the findings have been developed based on recognised theories, like Expectancy theory and Total Rewards Strategy. It has garnered the understanding that the level of employee motivation and retention can be extended significantly if they are linked to clear and meaningful performance-reward systems (Amadi et al., 2021). Further, an extended review of scholarly literature also informed how a balanced performance-based reward approach can be developed within a hospitality setting by integrating both monetary and non-monetary measures. From a managerial perspective, the findings stressed developing a transparent and standardised performance assessment system for hospitality organisations, like Hilton Croydon. As the findings critically explored the role of line managers in this context, the evidence can also help understand how managerial competencies can be built further to retain skilled talents in the long-term by customising rewards strategies as per evolving needs.

4.3.3 Research limitations

Although the study conducted an in-depth investigation regarding performance-based reward systems in Hilton Croydon, only secondary evidence has been collected. Hence, the absence of primary data gathered directly from the employees or managers of Hilton Croydon regarding the current performance-based reward systems and their implications and challenges in ensuring a positive employee engagement can be regarded as a major limitation. Compared to secondary web-based information, in line with the views of Watson and Jackson (2026), primary first-hand insights could be proven more effective in detecting the unexplored or unpublished facts related to the context.

4.4 Chapter summary

To sum up the discussion, it can therefore be stated that this study has conducted a detailed case study-based investigation on Hilton Croydon and identified the effectiveness of its performance-based reward strategies in retaining the majority of its skilled workers. The

discussion also assessed the core challenge of the performance assessment system that causes difficulties in evaluating individual contributions transparently in a team-based approach. The identification of solutions, although stressed the inclusion of a total rewards approach and enhancing managerial capabilities in developing a standardised performance assessment system, the absence of primary insights is a major limitation that needs to be overcome through further research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Overall conclusion

To conclude, this study aimed to assess the impact of performance-based incentive systems in improving staff engagement by focusing specifically on the Hilton Croydon hotel of the UK. The review of existing literature conducted for this essentially has shown how performance-based incentive systems directly contribute to not only employee engagement but it also improves talent retention irrespective of industries (Doan *et al.*, 2025). This research project, as highlighted above, adopted the secondary qualitative method where eligible sources from the existing repository of grey literature are consulted and the recurring patterns of data are treated as themes that are subjected afterwards to thematic analysis. The findings of this study essentially highlights the key elements of Croydon's performance-based incentive systems include benefits, perks, health benefits and opportunities for professional development. Through these, as the findings also show, Croydon, along with other hotels in the Hilton chain, has managed to improve the employee engagement rate notably, which is attributed to Hilton's data-driven approach toward incentive system design, which is lauded by multiple scholars (Zakaria and Lim, 2017). For example, performance-based incentives at Hilton include upskilling opportunities where the curriculum of the programs are designed based on real-time skill needs of the employees. However, the findings highlighted that the key problem with implementation is the lack of adequate performance measurement metrics, especially in the context of Hilton that relies on teamwork greatly. In this regard, the findings recommended adoption of peer-to-peer feedback systems while ensuring active engagement of departmental heads during performance evaluation to be able to compensate the employees proportionately.

5.2 Linking with objectives

Linking with Objective 1 - This objective aimed to explore the key elements of Croydon Hilton's performance-based incentive system that translates to good relationships with the workers. The findings essentially revealed that Hilton's incentive systems are distributed across multiple layers. In the first layer, consistent with the common understanding, comes various types of discounts and perks, along with health benefits and retirement benefits (Merriman *et al.*, 2016). However, this project has also shown how the upskilling and

personal development opportunities offered by Hilton Croydon can be considered within its reward systems.

Linking with Objective 2 - This objective strived for investigating the implications of Hilton Croydon's performance-based incentive systems on talent retention. Findings highlight how the cycle of benefits, along with the scopes for professional and personal development, contributed to 93% of employee engagement rate across all the hotels. Drawing from the insights of industry experts, the findings of this project further stressed how this can be attributed mainly to the tailored upskilling and educational opportunities.

Linking with Objective 3 - This objective aimed to analyse challenges associated with the implications of the reward systems at Hilton. The findings show that the problem essentially lies in the lack of tools to assess strategic performance accordingly. The analysis of the reviewed studies against the findings also informs that the inefficiencies of line managers due to inappropriate power concentration and their lack of knowledge in maintaining a transparent and standardised performance management approach significantly affect the development of effective employee engagement.

Linking with Objective 4 - This objective attempted to provide solutions to the implementation challenges identified above. Consistent with the suggestions of Issa *et al.* (2025), the solutions primarily include industry benchmarking. Furthermore, it also highlighted the need for a peer-to-peer recognition system for recording individual contributions accurately and, consequently, compensating the workers proportionately. Further, the solutions also emphasised the inclusion of a total rewards approach to develop a properly balanced performance-based reward system. Thus, this objective has been mostly met with the identification of how the managers of Hilton Croydon can effectively develop a transparent reward system by integrating both financial and non-financial measures.

5.3 Scope for future research

This project points at multiple areas where future researchers can focus on. Scholars like Adu *et al.* (2022) have highlighted, for instance, how a mixed method research consisting of both secondary and primary data can produce generalisable insights. As this research is based solely upon secondary data, the future researchers thus can plan a mixed method research to produce insights rooted in primary data. Secondly, though the findings of this research has

been able to highlight a statistically significant relationship between performance-based incentives and staff engagement, which, according to Lin *et al.* (2022), is valid across sectors, there is still ambiguity regarding how it actually takes place. Taking this as the point of departure, the future researchers can focus on specific elements (e.g., retirement benefits) to narrow down the scope and identify specific aspects that translate into employee engagement.

5.4 Recommendations

Adopt a multi-faceted, balanced performance assessment framework - The findings of this research mainly suggest that, though the performance-based incentive system at Hilton Croydon has been able to yield considerable employee engagement, it lacks metrics to assess performance accurately, especially since a majority of the crucial tasks are team-based. Considering this, Hilton Croydon can be recommended to adopt a multi-faceted performance assessment framework. In practice, it will be a balanced framework consisting of both quantitative metrics and qualitative insights, presumably from multiple sources such as peers, guests and supervisors. Existing research has shown how inaccurate performance assessment can lead to declining employee morale and, consequently, decreasing employee engagement (Osman, Opoku and Kyeraa, 2024; Darmawan, 2021). In the hospitality context, furthermore, as frontline and consumer-facing tasks are team-dependent, it is difficult to assess performance based on quantitative measures alone (Arnold, 2021). It is evident that the proposed multi-faceted performance assessment framework comes close to the 360-degree feedback system known for evaluation that is transparent and just (Kanaslan and Iyem, 2016). One can also highlight here how this proposed framework is consistent with the findings of this research. Some sources consulted here highlighted the importance of peer-to-peer recognition systems if clear performance assessment dimensions are targeted. The proposed framework, correspondingly, renders peers to be a major source of qualitative insights into the workers' performances.

Strengthen existing feedback mechanisms - It has become evident by now that Hilton Croydon hotel needs to leverage feedback mechanisms to compensate for the shortcomings of existing, inherently quantitative, performance metrics. Thus it is recommended to strengthen its existing feedback mechanisms. It can do that, for instance, by formulating transparent performance expectations (consistent with the notion of 'strategic performance') and offering feedback regularly, instead of waiting for annual performance assessments. Existing literature has shown that, though incentives are indeed crucial for making employees extrinsically

motivated to pursue goals, they are not enough if the standards of performance adopted by the firm are not clear to them (Wijsman *et al.*, 2019; Kuvaas *et al.*, 2017). In other words, as clear performance metrics are related to intrinsic motivation, one can invoke the postulates of Goal-Setting theory here that essentially highlight how continuous and regular feedback are crucial for making employees intrinsically motivated (Locke and Latham, 2019; Fong *et al.*, 2019). This recommendation for Hotel Croydon also refers to the importance of incorporating feedback in performance evaluation, as the findings of this study have suggested. In other words, this recommendation is also consistent with the overall findings of this research.

Implementation of a hybrid performance evaluation system: As per the findings, one of the main issues that the hotel is facing is its implementation of a performance-based incentive system. This is because it is difficult to accurately measure each employee's contribution to the betterment of the work, since most of the work is done in a collaborative manner and through teamwork. Therefore, it will be better for Hilton Croydon to establish a new system of performance evaluation in the first place that will be able to distinguish between individual and team contributions. Recommending a hybrid form of performance evaluation system for that purpose, which will combine team-level performance metrics and individual performance as well, alongside a peer feedback system as well (Ryba, 2024). The appraisal process should consist of the review of the document, as well as the feedback from colleagues and peers, through which the hotel will adopt better transparency in allocation and site-buying rewards. This will also be a better fair rewards system in the organisation. This kind of hybrid form, through digital mechanisms, will capture all elements that traditional models may compromise, enabling employees to trust even better.

Enhance the connection between performance-based incentives and personalised career development: There are multiple growth options extended by Hilton Hotel that are considered valuable for the growth of the employees, such as leadership training, loan-free education and other course offerings to employees. Thus, it will be a good strategy to link the performance incentives to more personalised and tailored growth opportunities for the employees, which will also reduce the attrition rates. Career development opportunities for employees, especially within hospitality settings, tend to increase employee commitment and loyalty. Organisations that invest in employee wellbeing and their development foster optimism, hope, psychological capital and self-efficacy among the employees. This improves the chances of retention (Ramajoe, Proos and Koko, 2025). Thus, it is recommended for

Hilton Croydon to expand its performance incentives scope and connect it to the personal goals of the employees and target to improve their career opportunities within the organisational environment. For example, such opportunities can be a leadership programme which is only accessible to those with certain performance-linked incentives. There can also be training and certification, which can only be availed through performance in a particular role, etc.

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