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Leveraging emerging technologies to enhance talent management practices in the telecommunications industry in South Africa

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“LEVERAGING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES TO ENHANCE TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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A research proposal submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business

May 2024

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the utilization of emerging technologies to enhance talent management practices within the South African telecommunications industry. The rapid evolution of technology presents both opportunities and challenges for Talent Management practitioners specifically in the field of talent acquisition, development, engagement, and retention. This requires organisations to leverage of a mixed-methods approach that integrates technology into their Talent Management processes.

Through semi-structured interviews targeted at Talent practitioners in the Telecommunications industry, This study investigates the utilization of emerging technologies to augment Talent Management practices within the Telecommunications industry in South Africa. By leveraging cutting-edge technologies, such as AI, machine learning, and data analytics, organizations can optimize talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies, thereby gaining a competitive edge in the dynamic market landscape.

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of how South African Telecommunications companies can harness the power of the technology at their disposal by leveraging of emerging technologies to optimize talent management practices, enhance organizational performance, and maintain competitiveness in the digital age.

In conclusion, the findings of this research underscore the transformative potential of emerging technologies in revolutionizing Talent Management within the Telecommunications sector of South Africa. Through strategic adoption and integration of these technologies, organizations can not only address current talent challenges but also proactively prepare for future workforce demands, ensuring sustained growth and success in the ever-evolving industry landscape.

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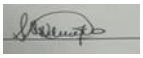
DECLARATION

I, Vuyokazi Ndiko, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Signed at …….Johannesburg…On this …31st… day of …May…… 2024….

Student signature: …………

Supervisor Name : ……. **Supervisor signature:** …31/05/2024…

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KEYWORDS

Key Terms	Definitions
I. Emerging technologies	According to Saadatmand, Safaie and Dastjerdi (2022), emerging technologies are the latest innovations that are currently developing and are likely to have a significant impact on society in the future
II. Talent Management	According to (Bersin, 2007-2020), talent management is an organisation's deliberate and ongoing process to ensure that its workforce has the necessary skills, knowledge and motivation to meet current and future business needs.
III. Telecommunications Industry	(Faccio & Zingales, 2027) refer to this industry as the mobile telecommunication sector defined by its technology innovations, using its core service which is to provide networks that enable the use of mobile phones.
IV. Talent Acquisition	A strategic approach to identifying, assessing and acquiring new employees for a company (Laura Hennigan, 2024)
V. Talent Development	According to the (Association for Talent Development, 2024)these are efforts that foster learning, employee engagement, talent management, and employee development to drive organizational performance, productivity, and results.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the innovative minds shaping the future of Talent Management in the Telecommunications industry of South Africa. To the leaders who envision a workforce empowered by emerging technologies, and to the professionals committed to unlocking the full potential of talent within our dynamic Telecommunications industry. Your dedication and willingness to adapt new ways of work gives an inspiration to explore new frontiers and revolutionize traditional practices. As a force, you can pave the way for a future where technology and Talent Management converge to drive unprecedented growth and excellence.

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Firstly, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all the individuals who contributed to the realization of this study on Leveraging emerging technologies to enhance Talent Management practices in the Telecommunications industry in South Africa. A special thank you to the Talent Management practitioners and professionals who are experts in Talent Management processes within the Telecommunications industry who generously shared their insights and expertise, providing invaluable guidance throughout the research process. I'll forever be grateful to my colleagues and peers for their unwavering support and constructive feedback, which enriched the quality and depth of my study.

To my Research Supervisor, Dr Cheryl Genga, I'll forever be indebted to you for your invaluable guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback throughout my research journey. This is for you, you believed in me when I did not believe in myself, your wisdom has been instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of this study and I appreciate you.

I would also like to acknowledge the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, and the Research Centres whose resources and facilities facilitated the success of my research journey, enabling me to explore and investigate innovative approaches to Talent Management in the context of emerging technologies specifically in the South African Telecommunications industry.

Furthermore, I express my appreciation to all the participants who generously volunteered their time and expertise for interviews, and discussions, without whom this study would not have been possible.

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Each contribution, no matter how small, has played a significant role in shaping this study, and for that, I am deeply grateful.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In a recent interview (Dowidar, 2022) most of the telecoms companies in South Africa are transitioning from being traditional telecoms into becoming technology companies. This is often referred to as transformation. Dowidar (2022) further points out that this transformation requires new service offerings that require new knowledge and skills, as well as the new skills in emerging technologies (like AI and Machine Learning) that make the new ways of work possible.

In addition, the sudden changes that Covid-19 imposed on organisations and the way in which these organisations responded to these changes played a crucial role in the South African Telecommunications Industry. One factor that accelerated change is technology. Change within organisations presents challenges that must be responded to timeously if the organisation is to remain competitive. Organisations that refuse to take advantage of change are often lacking in their competitive advantage. Therefore, it is imperative that talent management practitioners in the South African Telecommunications Industry embrace changes that are brought about by the ever-emerging technologies.

This transformation comes with changes and evolution. Part of the response to these changes is leveraging emerging technologies to enhance practices within the telecoms in South Africa and integrating them in how they operate in order to maintain competitive advantage. Talent management practices are no exception and there is a requirement for talent management practitioners to take advantage and immerse themselves in emerging technologies to enhance their practices.

The telecommunications industry in South Africa has evolved from a state-controlled monopoly to a more liberalised and competitive market. Before 1994, the sector was dominated by the state-owned South African Telecommunications Corporation (Telkom). After the democratic transition in 1994, the government embarked on a

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process of liberalisation and introduced the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to encourage competition in the mobile sector. According to Moyo and Munoriyawa (2021), this industry is centred around Gauteng and is dominated by four major mobile operators, i.e. Vodacom, MTN, Cell C and Telkom. These authors indicate that mobile penetration has surged, and mobile phones have become a primary means of communication, even in remote and underserved areas, thus providing a healthy landscape in terms of competition amongst the four mobile operators and many emerging ones.

According to Bersin (2007-2020), talent management is a natural evolution of HR. It is a series of business processes — not a “product” or “solution” you can buy. As organisations strive to meet business goals and improve business performance, they must make sure that there are continuous and integrated processes for recruiting, training, managing, supporting and compensating people as per the complete talent management cycle with all of its processes that include sourcing, recruiting, training and development efforts that help organisations to meet their business objectives. The use of technology in talent management practices has played a crucial role in streamlining and modernising these processes (Bersin, 2007-2020).

1.2 Statement of Purpose

Previous research (Ngwenya, 2017) presents evidence that the telecommunications industry in South Africa can sometimes be slack with regard to utilisation of emerging technologies. This slacking makes organisations in this industry lose opportunities to be game changers and gain a competitive edge in the industry. Practitioners who are responsible for human capital and talent management in particular need to develop strategies to attract, develop and support as well as retain talented employees in their organisations. The main purpose of this study is to investigate and describe how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry.

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1.3 The Research Problem

COVID-19 was officially declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organisation on 11th March 2020 (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Organisations were grandly shaken and that resulted in a complex and challenging environment for human resource managers (HRM) and talent practitioners who had to find solutions to ensure business continuity and to also help employees to cope with the unprecedented situation. Organisations of all sizes and across industry types experienced significant revenue reductions and budget shortfalls. They faced monumental talent management challenges including hiring freezes and layoffs; salary freezes, cancelled bonuses and pay reductions, how work is done (remote ways of work); and increased employee stress and burnout. These are challenges that, to some extent, had already existed in the past, but they were amplified as a result of the pandemic, so most organisations had to reconsider their policies and processes to allow their businesses to continue effectively (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021).

As organisations in the telecommunications industry strive to effectively respond to external threats, some form of resilience is required (Bailey & Breslin, 2021). It is the view of Bailey & Breslin (2021) that organisational resilience depends on the strength of its employees, and organisations had to adapt to the new ways of work, as well as interpersonal interactions and relationships within the work environment. Most organisations, if not all, found themselves unable to respond effectively to challenges that ensued as the result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to Bersin (2007-2020), talent management may be the biggest challenge facing HR today. For example, recruitment overnight and the subsequent “Great Resignation” has led employees across industries including Telecoms to re-evaluate their careers, prioritise their wellbeing and, in many cases, make big life changes. At the moment, there is a very tight talent market, and this therefore means that businesses are fiercely competing for the same talent. It is clear that those who can continue to hire great employees will gain a strategic competitive edge. But with all

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this disruption, how can our organisations ensure that they are still able to source, recruit and retain top talent?

Mwita (2020) established that organisations are not able to ‘bounce back’ due to the permanent mark left by Covid-19 in the workplace. Mwita (2020) found that organisations were not able to achieve their previously set goals. In some instances, employees were laid off and sometimes replaced by independent contractors (Foss, 2021). This could possibly be attributed to the challenges of monitoring employee performance, as most employees were working remotely. The consequences of the inability to ‘bounce back’ affected employees directly. According to Mwita (2020), organisations are experiencing difficulty in meeting their financial obligations to employees and providing a healthy work-life balance. This situation indicates a serious deficit in talent management practices as performance management has become more challenging for organisations. The above situation is despite the potential capability of technology to enhance talent management practices. According to Foss (2020), economic fundamentals such as technology can be used to fast-track the process of going back to normalcy. Foss (2021) indicates that during the 1929 Great Depression period the use of technology enhanced recovery, and technology grew to its highest during the pre-WWII decades. The slow return of the economy to normalcy can be attributed to the slow pace of organisations to adapt and use the technologies at their disposal. According to Saadatmand, Safaie & Dastjerdi (2022), the telecommunications industry in South Africa was faced with the advent of COVID-19. Before March 2020 the industry was solid and occupied a significant market, however, during Covid-19 this industry was forced to shrink due to challenges posed by the pandemic. This shrinkage is in terms of the organisational profits, the market and human resources. This is despite the industry being rife with all kinds of technologies, viz. Artificial intelligence (AI), Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and Big Data etc. (Saadatmand, Safaie, & Dastjerdi, 2022).

Now post COVID the industry needs to ‘bounce back’ to the solid state. Therefore, the main problem that this study seeks to address can be captured in question form: “How

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can emerging technologies be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry?

1.4 Significance of the study

The World Economic Forum projected in its Future of Jobs Report 2023 that half of all employees worldwide would need reskilling by 2025 According to the report, before COVID-19, the rise of automation and new technologies transformed the world of work, resulting in an urgent need for large-scale upskilling and reskilling.

Half of the workforce will need to reskill in the next five years, as the double-disruption and the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are increasing with automation that transforms jobs (World Economic Forum, 2023)

A study on leveraging emerging technologies to enhance talent management practices in the South African telecommunications industry holds significant importance for several reasons as follows:

1.4.1 Industry Competitiveness and Innovation

The Telecommunications industry in general is a cornerstone of modern economies, driving innovation and connectivity. By adopting emerging technologies, South African telecoms companies can stay competitive in a rapidly evolving global market. Enhanced talent management through technology can lead to improved innovation, productivity, and service delivery, ensuring that these companies remain at the forefront of technological advancements.

1.4.2 Enhancing Employee Engagement and Retention

Effective talent management practices supported by technology can improve employee engagement and retention. Technologies like AI-driven analytics can provide insights into employee satisfaction and performance, allowing for more personalized career development plans and a better work environment. This is crucial for retaining top talent and reducing turnover, which can be particularly costly in the telecom industry.

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1.4.3 Addressing Skills Gaps

South Africa faces significant skills gaps in the technology sector. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and big data analytics, can help identify these gaps more accurately and develop targeted training and development programs. This will enable telecom companies to build a more skilled and adaptable workforce, capable of meeting current and future industry demands.

1.4.4 Adaptation to Remote Work and Digital Transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards remote work and digital transformation. Emerging technologies are essential for managing remote teams effectively, ensuring productivity, and maintaining corporate culture. By leveraging these technologies, telecoms companies can adapt to new ways of working, ensuring continuity and resilience in their operations.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

In order to realize the purpose of this study captured above, the following objectives need to be achieved:

I. To explore emerging technologies from the talent management practices' perspective.
II. To identify the talent management practices applicable, specifically in the South African Telecommunications Industry
III. To investigate how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry.

1.6 Rationale

Every business, with the exception of social businesses, are established to firstly grow and then yield satisfactory revenue for the owners or shareholders. The vision, mission and values of an organisation are all founded on the principles of growth,

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particularly in terms of profits. Therefore, all employees, from executive level down to the lowest ranked employee, are recruited to further the mission and objectives of the organisation. In this sense, the organisation sets up structures and develops systems that are geared towards the vision and mission statements. As alluded to by Ngwenya (2017), intellectual capital relates to the organisational structures, human capital and relational capital. Over-emphasising one or two of these at the expense of the other will prove detrimental to the organisation. However, this study will be looking through the human capital lens to understand how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry.

Telecommunication industries (TCIs) face a number of challenges. Some of these challenges are external to the organisation, while others are internal. According to Ostojić (2022), talent management is a process that happens internally within the organisation and its sole purpose is to provide talented human capital that will drive the mission and vision of the organisation. The vision is that Telco or Telco alliances could become global technological champions, which comprises expanding services beyond connectivity, focusing on providing users with a seamless digital experience. The shift is known as the move from Telco to TechCo. Many companies are already undergoing this transformation. For example, Vodafone is splitting the organisation into network infrastructure and digital functions while expanding the scope of services leveraging 5G, IoT, Cloud and edge infrastructure. It is for this reason that talent management practitioners need to be at the cutting edge of knowledge in their field, leveraging emerging technologies in order to operate efficiently. The business environment is characterised by stiff competition and according to Ngwenya (2017), human capital determines the competitive advantage of a business. The talent management function is purposefully geared towards the human capital of the organisation. Therefore ‘looking out’ for employees is the main function of talent managers. Graham, Zaharie and Ososian (2023) conducted a study with which they sought to propose that talent management practices (TMPs) and talent management philosophy have a bearing on the performance of employees. The study concluded

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that organisations need to hold talent managers accountable for the implementation of TMPs.

This study subscribes to the learning organisation theory and reiterates that these talent managers have the capacity to understand that the TCI is a fast-changing environment and therefore even employees ‘move’ with these changes. To manage such talent requires talent managers to constantly scan the technological environment to identify and understand emerging trends. It is in this way that their practice can be enhanced. Enhancing talent management practices enhances organisational performance (Dhir, Rajan, Ongsaku, & Ahmed, 2021).

1.7 Assumptions

There are various assumptions that the study seeks to explore and possibly confirm.

1.7.1 Human interaction replaced by emerging technologies

As technology can be used to simplify and streamline some of the talent management practices, there is a risk of losing the human element that can lead to lack of trust and low employee engagement.

1.7.1 Organisational readiness

It is assumed that organisations have the necessary infrastructure and resources to adopt and integrate emerging technologies into their talent management practices. This includes technical expertise to implement and maintain these technologies.

1.7.2 Employee acceptance and adoption

The study assumes that the managers and talent management practitioners are open to embrace emerging technologies in talent management practices and are willing to adapt to new tools and processes with a positive perception of these technologies and an understanding of their potential benefits to the workforce.

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1.7.3 Availability of emerging technologies

The study assumes that there are various emerging technologies available that can be leveraged in talent management and these technologies are to enhance the processes and tools in talent management practices.

1.7.4 Return on investment (ROI)

The study assumes that leveraging emerging technologies in talent management will result in measurable improvements and a positive ROI for the organisation. This can include increased efficiency, better decision-making, improved employee engagement, and enhanced talent acquisition and retention.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The following constitute delimitations of the study. Firstly, the industry in which the study is located presents the researcher candidate with the opportunity regarding access to respondents, as well as the understanding of the industry. Secondly, the choice of respondents is a delimitation to the study. Talent managers will be selected to respond to the research tool as they form the gist of this study. In addition, the research design will be qualitative as the study seeks to explore how new emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices.

1.9 Definition of Terms

The following terms form the backbone of the study and therefore they should be defined to provide the context of the study.

1.9.1 Talent management

According to Bersin (2007-2020), talent management is an organisation's deliberate and ongoing process to ensure that its workforce has the necessary skills, knowledge and motivation to meet current and future business needs. Bersin (2007-2020) further explains that talent management includes sourcing, recruiting, training

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and development efforts that help organisations to meet their business objectives. The use of technology in talent management practices has played a crucial role in streamlining and modernising these processes.

For the purpose of this study, talent management is defined as a process that involves Attracting, Developing, Retaining, Performance Managing, Recognising and Rewarding talent.

1.9.2 Telecommunication industries

The term telecommunication is derived from a number of perspectives. Faccio and Zingales (2018) refer to this industry as the mobile telecommunication sector mobile service industry, while Lim, Yeo and Ling (2018) refer to it as the mobile service providers. However, Jia, Durrani and Chen (2018) offer a description of this term based on its evolution. According to Lim, Yeo and Ling (2018), the modern telecommunication industry is “an active ecosystem with a ten-year cycle time for the evolution wave from 1G to 5G”. Nekmahmud and Rahman (20118) point out that the telecommunications industry is defined by its technology innovations, using its core service which is to provide networks that enable the use of mobile phones.

Therefore, in this study, telecommunications industry refers to the mobile industry that is characterised by incremental technological innovations to improve communication.

1.9.3 Emerging technologies

Emerging technologies can be defined as technologies that will define the next generation of communication standards. According to Chin (2017), emerging technologies are a combination of different enabling technologies that work together to define the future. For the purpose of the study, emerging technologies denote all technologies that have the potential or are already changing the game of communication in the South African Telecommunications Industry. Key aspects of these emerging technologies are improved capacity, coverage and energy efficiency.

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1.10 Chapter Outline

The Chapter format has been used for this report. It consists of the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1** - The Introduction which explains the purpose of the study, background of the study, defining the problem and objectives of the study.
- **Chapter 2** - Literature review and theoretical framework
- **Chapter 3 -** Research methodology that will be followed to address the propositions that arose from literature review.
- **Chapter 4 –** Presentation of findings based in the data collected.
- **Chapter 5 -** Discussion of the findings
- **Chapter 6 –** Summary, Recommendations

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2 CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The focus of this section is a literature review on 'Leveraging emerging technologies to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry. The section will firstly look at literature from an international perspective followed by the South African perspective. The purpose of the section is to establish what authorities in the area of talent management practice and technology have written, and then to synthesise what has been written.

2.2 The Telecommunications Industry in South Africa

According to ICASA (2019), South Africa has four licensed telecoms operators: MTN, Vodacom (majority owned by the UK's Vodafone), Cell C (75% owned by Saudi Oger, an international telecommunication holding firm) and Telkom. With Vodacom and MTN controlling 75% of the market share, ICASA considers that mobile brand services are highly concentrated in the country. A new provider, Rain, was launched in 2018 providing majority data only services to consumers.

According to Gaille (2019), the telecommunications industry of South Africa is one of the most advanced on the continent, offering high levels of mobile penetration, growing Internet connections, and an advancing infrastructure which has all come about since 2008. Gaille (2018) further indicates that the industry has gone from an introduction of free social media usage to the launch of localised streaming platforms that will eventually help the country to catch up with the United States, the UK and others who are already benefitting from high levels of broadband access.

According to the State of the ICT Sector Report (2019), the telecommunications industry contributes almost 3% to the country's GDP each year, with a slight increase (0.2%) occurring between 2018 - 2019. The Independent Communications

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Authority of South Africa (ICASA) is the watchdog of the telecommunications in the country.

The structure of the telecommunications industry is composed of three elements, viz. the enterprises which have absolute returns in the industry; and customers/consumers who come in different categories. They can either be individuals, corporates or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Buhr, Nel, & Dos Dantos, 2006). In particular, Buhr, Nel and Dos Dantos (2006) paint a picture of a telecommunication enterprise. An enterprise that operates in the telecommunication industry is constituted by senior management, which includes human resources (HR), finance, marketing etc. Senior managers are the managers of business in their respective business units in the organisation (Buhr, Nel, & Dos Dantos, 2006). An essential point alluded to in the authors' study is that competitive edge in telecommunications enterprises is assessed based on how well the operational support systems perform. How well the employees do their work impacts the organisation. However, support systems need to be in place to support, motivate and develop every employee, including talent managers and talented employees. Okharedia (2013) borrows from self-efficacy theory that indicates that senior managers and managers in general in an organisation are expected to be proactive, self-reflecting and self-organising. In particular, managers in the telecommunication industry cannot afford to be reactive to the evolution sweeping across the industry in which they operate. Talent management practitioners should operate in line with the self-efficacy beliefs that should not be reacting to the external environment of their organisation. Rather they should be proactive and take advantage of the new technologies and capacitate their internal structures which is human resources. Talent management practitioners can take control of the competitive external telecommunication environment by leveraging on the new technologies available to them.

The telecommunications industry in South Africa continued to make progress in augmenting its network capacity with additional fibre and wireless deployments to meet the constant demand for higher-speed networks in 2021. However, as of 2022,

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there was an emerging set of issues and opportunities presented by a dynamic regulatory, technological and competitive environment that may influence the sector’s progress in the coming years (Hofmeyer, 2022).

South Africa's telecommunications industry has undergone remarkable growth in recent years. It has witnessed a surge in the number of subscribers, alongside the introduction of cutting-edge technologies such as 5G and fibre-optic networks (Matome Ditlhake, CEO, Corridor Africa, 2023). According to Ditlhake (2023) despite these advancements, a significant gap still exists when it comes to customer satisfaction and loyalty as a result, this underscores the urgency for a transformation that focuses on customer-centric approaches.

As customer demands become increasingly sophisticated and technology advances, the need for a comprehensive transformation within the industry has never been more apparent. "It is essential for the entire industry to come together; collaborative efforts with other telecommunications providers and regulatory bodies will be pivotal in creating a more customer-centric ecosystem, the goal is not only to enhance customer experience and loyalty, but also to create an industry that fosters innovation and empowers all South Africans to thrive in the digital age (Matome Ditlhake, CEO, Corridor Africa, 2023)

The Telecoms industry is evolving quickly, as businesses and consumers seek out game-changing use cases that display a range of seamless digital interactions that operate on the back of telcos’ substantial 5G infrastructure investments (McKinsey, Tech talent in transition:, 2023)

According to the McKinsey research (2023) telco operators with ambitious goals regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion should be particularly intentional about developing sustainable, long-term talent pipelines. This therefore means that, as telcos evolve to deliver on the opportunities that AI, augmented and virtual reality, and other emerging technologies unlock, they will need to be highly strategic about

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identifying and attracting talent with the expertise and abilities that each technology demands.

2.3 Emerging Technologies

According to Saadatmand, Safaie and Dastjerdi (2022), emerging technologies are the latest innovations that are currently developing and are likely to have a significant impact on society in the future. These technologies are still in the early stages of development and adoption and are likely to attract significant investment and huge transformation across different industries in the coming years. These technologies will continue to transform lives and the world as the development of these technologies will shape the way in which we work, live and interact with one another. It is crucial to mitigate their risks and maximise their benefits for a better future ahead. Emerging technologies drive innovation in organisations by pushing the boundaries of what is possible to enable them to stay ahead of the curve in a global competitive market. Emerging technologies are shaping the world in unprecedented ways. They have the power to transform industries, create new job opportunities, and change the way in which we live and work (Saadatmand, Safaie, & Dastjerdi, 2022).

These authors further point out that emerging technologies refer to the application and implementation of advancements in various fields such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, robotics, quantum computing and 3D printing. They further indicate that these innovations have the potential to revolutionise the way in which we do things. Examples of emerging technologies are nanorobotics, that involves the creation of robots at a microscopic level, and augmented reality which enhances our perceptions by overlaying digital information onto the physical word.

2.3.1 Emerging Technologies that impact the Telecommunications industry

Amir (2022) indicates that the last two years have been defined by resilience, recovery and defensive strategies for Telcos, but in 2023 it was time for them to

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take the reins back and go on the offensive. According to Sania, it is pivotal to step forward from the side-lines and take initiative regarding digital transformation and innovative tech solutions. This is especially important since the market trends that were once categorised as ‘new and emerging’ are now ‘evolving and maturing’ across telecoms. According to Ostojić (2022), the future of telecommunications promises to be an extraordinary era of connectivity, innovation and transformation. As technology advances rapidly, we can expect the sector to play a crucial role in shaping our societies and revolutionising how we communicate, work and live. With 5G and integrating technologies like AI, VR, IoT, and blockchain, we can expect faster speeds, seamless connectivity, superior customer experience and new business operating models.

2.4 Talent Management

Talent management is a comprehensive and strategic approach to attracting, developing and retaining the most valuable and skilled individuals within an organisation. It encompasses various processes and practices aimed at identifying high-potential employees, nurturing their skills and aligning their talents with the organisation's goals and objectives, in order to build a workforce that delivers exceptional results (Bersin, 2007-2020). Below is a graphical representation of Josh Bersin’s integrated Talent Management Approach.



Figure 1– *source (Josh Bersin’s approach to Talent Management)*

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According to De Lestrange (2019), talent management is actually a term that has never had a rigid definition, and that is great because it was given room to evolve as organisations themselves evolved. He further indicated that talent management 20 years ago isn't what talent management is today. Whilst the global meaning of the term – a strategy to help organisations to make the most of their people – has always been broadly the same, the focus and impact on employees and the business has changed. De Lestrange (2019) further illustrates that talent management used to focus on the most talented employees in the organisation and many firms used grid systems to identify high performers. One of the most popular grids is the 9-box which accesses employees based on potential and performance, with the highest performance and potential sitting in the top right and the lowest performers and potential sitting in the bottom left. The main issue with this 9-box system is that more focus is placed on retaining the high performers and maximising those with high potential. Where does that leave the others, whose potential is not recognised yet? Unfortunately, this traditional definition is still commonly used across Europe, as various studies supported by Cornerstone have shown.

De Lestrange (2019) also indicates that the technology of today brings together talent management – answering the needs of the business – and talent experience – answering the needs of the employees.

Emerging technologies like Artificial intelligence (AI) and gamification approaches have also helped to evolve talent management platforms into high performing systems which are key to Attracting, Retaining, Developing and Rewarding people. Moreover, well optimised automation technology alongside human input helps to surface employees and candidates with untapped potential, giving them a means to thrive in the organisation. It is that push and support which organisations need towards a more diverse workforce (De Lestrange, 2019).

2.4.1 Talent management practices

Hancock and Schhaninger (2020) indicate five talent-management practices that can help to steer organisations through new ways of working. These are:

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- **Finding and hiring the right people:** The war for talent across industries is increasing, therefore efficient and effective hiring will continue to be important, especially for the scarce skills required for the future.

- **Learning and growing:** Learning organisations face a tension between continuing cost pressures in a downturn and the need to deliver training to help workers to adapt to a changing organisation and business environment. Research on reskilling shows that talent management practitioners need to think about the effects of large workforce transitions being accelerated by the pandemic and how reskilling plays a key role in helping to close talent gaps while keeping employees connected to jobs. According to McKinsey Research (2020), learning and development extends beyond reskilling to a focus on digital skills, focused upskilling and leadership development.

- **Managing and rewarding performance**: The performance management systems should accurately reflect top performer's contributions with transparency, whilst rewarding excellent performance.

- **Tailoring the employee experience:** Employee experience and connectivity have taken on whole new meanings as extended work-from-home policies have required organisations to be intentional about building each. In blunt terms, work cannot be another source of anxiety or uncertainty for employees right now. Talent practitioners will need to establish norms of working that foster engagement and inclusion for all employees. There is no one size fits all solution.

- **Optimising workforce planning and strategy:** The shift to remote ways of work requires strategic workforce planning focusing more on critical roles, talent and skills pools, and a leadership pipeline.

According to Adams (2023), traditional talent management practices are no longer fit for purpose. Adams (2023) further explains that while the business world continues to speed up and become more complex, our beliefs in traditional talent management

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approaches are coming into question. They are no longer relevant in today's fast-paced world, or they rely on assumptions we have since discredited. These traditional practices include:

- **Leadership competency frameworks** - a set of skills and behaviours that leaders can collect to prove that they are perfect leaders. But the concept of the perfect leader is of course, totally flawed (Adams, 2023).

- **Talent reviews:** The idea that any talent review can happen only once a year and still have relevance and impact is for another, slower age. It is fundamentally flawed for leaders to drive decisions based on line managers' subjective views on someone's potential. There is a risk of backing the wrong horses if that is our only determinant of talent (Adams, 2023).

- **Succession planning:** In succession planning, the leaders identify the people they have been working with forever. They know them, they trust them, and sometimes, they've even promised them they could have their job when they go. This, of course, reinforces the existing silos and tends to produce a collection of "mini-me's" in terms of leadership style and behaviour. Though it is an understandable preference for sticking with what you know, it is however terrible for a diverse pipeline and the breadth of perspectives needed (Adams, 2023).

- **High-potential programmes:** High-potential programmes don't deliver. They are divisive and expensive and focus the majority of our leadership investment on too small a group of people (Adams, 2023). McKinsey (2023) indicates that fortunately, HR teams are now introducing smarter approaches to talent management and delivering it in ways that have more impact and relevance. Let's look at three new talent trends.

According to McKinsey (2023), there are new talent management trends that can be alternatives to the traditional talent management practices, and they are:

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- **Articulate what you want them to DO, not BE:** instead of the futile exercise of trying to define what perfect leadership looks like, HR teams can focus more on what they want leaders to do and achieve. By focusing on these outcomes, they ensure that leaders are doing the things that matter, whilst not prescribing the best way to deliver them, thus allowing leaders to use a style that works for them. Talent management practitioners provide support to leaders by using pulse surveys to measure whether employees feel that the organisation helps them to perform better, appreciates what they do, and gives them the right level of autonomy to do their best work.

- **Focus on the majority, not the elite: There is a decline in obsession with the top elite.** HR teams are finding new ways to help and ensure that the majority of people reach their potential. Every individual has their own definition of what their growth looks like, and this helps managers to avoid the usual unconscious bias and instead think more broadly about their teams.

- **Process-lite talent management:** HR teams are enabling regular but process-lite discussions amongst leaders about their talent, as leaders like talking about their people, but they just hate the prep work and the documenting of their assessments and decisions.

2.4.2 Understanding emerging technologies from the talent management practices' perspective

Technology has occupied every sphere in the globe, including organisational spaces. Saadatmand, Safaie and Dastjerdi (2022) point out that today every enterprise in any industry is faced with changes in technologies. Technologies such as 5g network technology, Internet of Things (IOT), Cloud Services, Business Intelligence (BI) and Data Analytics are popular concepts within major industries (Saadatmand, Safaie, & Dastjerdi, 2022). As a result, there is no way of escaping the presence of technology.

These technologies have affected the way in which organisations are managed. Talent management functions within organisations have not escaped the effects of

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technology. Saadatmand, Safaie and Dastjerdi (2022) state that Industry 4.0 has caused rapid change that resulted in a considerable disjuncture between the existing ability of staff and the evolving necessity and relevance of their roles. This gap has created challenges for those who manage staff, in particular talent managers. It is in this sense that Schultz (2021) suggests that there is a need for talent managers to 'jerk up' their trade. The continuous evolution of technology, particularly in organisation, has challenged these organisations to find more innovative approaches to managing talent (Schultz, 2021). To be more specific, these technologies include the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the incumbent Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR). Whilst the 4IR is a set of traditional products and industrial practices, the 5IR requires organisations and employees to use unique features of artificial intelligence (AI) (Saadatmand, Safaie, & Dastjerdi, 2022). It cannot be disputed that the mantra "different strokes for different folks' does not apply in this digital era. According to Saadatmand, Safaie and Dastjerdi (2022), the digital era and knowledge-based economy requires organisations to look for suitable resources, including technologies and a talented workforce, if they are to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. The authors argue that a sustainable competitive advantage is only achievable through the use of talent. Therefore, talent is the most critical aspect required by organisations to achieve competitive advantage. It is in this context that the authors argue that organisations should consider technology as an approach to manage organisational talent, expertise and proficiency.

Findings by Saadatmand, Safaie and Dastjerdi (2022) in the study that they conducted in Iran indicate that integrating technology with talent management in a telecommunication organisation yields a competitive advantage for the organisation. Managers who utilise digital talent management in Iran indicated that it aided them to hire the right people in a more quantified, timely and precise manner. The study concluded that digital talent management (DTM) is imperative in enhancing talent management practices and invariably helping the organisation to gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

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This study will focus on emerging technologies that can be leveraged in talent management practices in the telecommunications industry.

2.5 What Talent management practices are applicable specifically in the Telecommunications Industry?

2.5.1 Talent management practices applicable specifically in the Telecommunications industry

In today's rapidly changing business environment, leveraging emerging technologies is critical to stay ahead of the competition. According to Rukunga and Nzulwa (2018), organisations are faced with a challenge of losing talent. The telecommunications industry is characterised by stiff competition for talent and innovation (Erdogan & Kunday, 2022). For an organisation to prosper under stiff competition requires a suitable talent management strategy. Erdogan and Kunday (2022) point out that talent management practices involve Attracting, Developing, Performance Managing, Rewarding and Retaining talent.

Any strategy that seeks to give the organisation a competitive edge puts these five key elements at the centre of talent management. El Khateeb (2022) indicates that the successful application of these key elements of talent management in the telecommunications industry “will improve and enhance the quality of company standard operating procedures, such as work efficiency, productivity and effectiveness”.

In their study conducted in Kenya, Rukunga and Nzulwa (2018) concluded that effective talent management strategy has a great influence on the performance of telecommunication firms in Kenya. Managing careers using “career counselling, identification of career goals, development skills and strengths, as well as identification of weaknesses to achieve career goals enhanced talent management (Rukunga & Nzulwa, 2018). However, practising the five key elements of talent management, viz. talent attraction, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, career management and reward and

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recognition need to be integrated with innovation in order to put their organisation at a point of advantage. In their study, Erdogan and Kunday (2022) concluded that successful career development coupled with management practices have the potential to significantly and positively influence sustainable organisational performance of the telecommunications industry.

This study sought to identify competencies that managers in the telecommunications industry are supposed to exhibit in order to perform their functions optimally. The study established that development is top of the list of the functions of managers and leaders. A manager in the telecommunications industry is no exception. Continuous development of the skills and knowledge is critical for talent managers and practitioners in the telecommunications industry (TCI).

Leveraging new technologies to enhance talent management practices in the telecommunications industry is informed by factors like the recent COVID-19 and the broader performance of organisations in the telecommunications industry. In particular the role of talent management practitioners bears the greater weight of the study on leveraging new technologies to enhance talent management. Effective talent management practices have a direct relationship to organisational performance, culture and consequently to accelerated business growth (Erdogan & Kunday, 2022).

The growth of an organisation depends on the performance of its employees, and the calibre of talented employees depends on the role that talent managers and practitioners play in ensuring that there are the right people with the right skills in the right positions. The disastrous impact of Covid-19 on organisational performance dictates that talent management practices be enhanced so that they can firstly mitigate the negative effects of Covid-19, but secondly develop more resilience for future unforeseen disasters. Therefore, this chapter looks at the literature on talent management practices and how emerging technologies can enhance these practices in order for the telecommunications industry to grow and become resilient (Erdogan & Kunday, 2022).

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2.5.2 The effects of emerging technologies on talent management practices

The effects of emerging technologies were acutely felt during Covid-19. The lockdown that was implemented in South Africa exposed most organisations, in particular those in the telecommunications industry. Although technology was at their disposal even before the lockdown, telecommunications found themselves unable to operate with greater ease. Adams (2023) points out that Covid-19 was a reminder to the telecommunications industry that it cannot be ‘business as usual”. The economy was a casualty as businesses almost came to a standstill.

Aguinis and Burgi-Tian (2012) indicate that on the global stage major international corporations were also struggling with global talent management (GTM), even before Covid-19. The advent of Covid-19 just worsened the situation for talent management. Mwita (2020) indicates that Covid-19 had a huge impact on human resource management practices in Tanzania. Furthermore, Mwita (2020), argues that during turbulent times in the life of organisations, talent management needs to demonstrate how strategic and capable it can be, to deal with effects that are beyond its control. Effectively managing talent during a crisis reduces the negative impact on employees and organisations, and it is the role of human resources to do that. Aguinis and Burgi-Tian (2021) are of the view that it is during the times of turbulence that talent managers and technology leaders can call into play new approaches to sourcing, supporting and scaling up technology expertise. According to Rukunga and Nzulwa (2018), only organisations that are able to develop and use digital talent management strategies will cope with the changes and they are likely to escape the “economic disappearance”. Those organisations that are reactive are likely to suffer and sometimes disappear from the world of business. Coping with new technologies such as 4IR is not a matter of choice anymore, as evidenced during the Covid-19 crisis. It is a do or die situation (Rukunga & Nzulwa, 2018).

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2.6 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.6.1 Theoretical Framework

The main purpose of this study is to investigate and describe how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry. Therefore, this study is premised upon two key concepts, viz. emerging technologies and talent management. To be able to fully investigate, explore, analyse and understand these concepts and their relationship in the telecommunications industry, it is important to delve into theoretical frameworks that will help to:

- Explore emerging technologies from the talent management practices' perspective.
- Identify the talent management practices applicable specifically in the South African Telecommunications Industry
- Investigate how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry.

A theoretical framework will enhance the quality and depth of the study, as it serves as the backbone of this study, providing structure, direction and coherence. It will enhance the rigor, validity and relevance, while contributing to the broader theoretical and empirical knowledge in this field.

Below are two theories that the researcher believes are relevant to the proposed study.

2.6.1.1 Innovation diffusion theory

According to Sahin (2006), the history of innovation diffusion theory (IDT) dates back to 1962 when Everett Rogers, a communication theorist at the University of New Mexico first introduced it. The theory was popularised by Everett Rogers in his book *Diffusion of Innovations*, first published in 1962. In his book, Rogers argues that

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diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated over time among the participants in a social system. The origins of the diffusion of innovations theory are varied and span multiple disciplines.

Rogers further proposes that five main elements influence the spread of a new idea:

- **The innovation itself** - Any idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption could be considered an innovation available for study.
- **Adopters** - Adopters are the minimal unit of analysis. In most studies, adopters are individuals, but can also be organisations (businesses, schools, hospitals, etc.), clusters within social networks, or countries.
- **Communication Channels** - Diffusion, by definition, takes place among people or organisations. Communication channels allow the transfer of information from one unit to the other. Communication patterns or capabilities must be established between parties as a minimum for diffusion to occur.
- **Time** - The passage of time is necessary for innovations to be adopted; they are rarely adopted instantaneously. In fact, in the Ryan and Gross (1943) study on hybrid corn adoption, adoption occurred over more than ten years, and most farmers only dedicated a fraction on their fields to the new corn in the first years after adoption.
- **Social system** - The social system is the combination of external influences (mass media, organisational or governmental mandates) and internal influences that enable adoption to the potential adopters.

According to Singer (2014), the process of diffusion of innovations relies heavily on social capital. The innovation must be widely adopted in order to self-sustain. Within the rate of adoption, there is a point at which an innovation reaches critical mass.

This theory focuses on the adoption of technologies and innovation in different industries. Within this theory, technologies are regarded as enablers of change. This

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indicates that the diffusion of innovations theory seeks to explain how and why new ideas and practices are adopted, including why the adoption of new ideas can be spread out over long periods (Sahin, 2006).

The author further explains the passage of a new idea through stages of adoption by different people who participate in or begin using the new idea. The main people in the diffusion of innovations theory are:

- **Innovators**: Those who are open to risks and the first to try new ideas.
- **Early adopters**: People who are interested in trying new technologies and establishing their utility in society.
- **Early majority**: Those who pave the way for the use of an innovation within mainstream society and are part of the general population.
- **Late majority**: People who follow the early majority into adopting the innovation as part of their daily life and are also part of the general population.
- **Laggards**: People who lag behind the general population in adopting innovative products and new ideas.

In this proposed study, technology is regarded as the driver of change in the South African Telecommunications Industry. Talent managers are crucial in driving change within organisations, and being innovative in the era of technology is of particular importance. This theory will identify emerging technologies from a talent management perspective and explore how these emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry.

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the innovation diffusion theory will provide a valuable framework for investigating the adoption and diffusion of emerging technologies in talent management practices. By examining the roles of innovators, early adopters, perceived advantage, resistance, communication and critical mass, this study aims to explore how emerging technologies can be leveraged effectively to enhance talent management practices in the telecommunications industry.

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Understanding the diffusion process is essential for HR professionals and organisational leaders as they navigate the evolving landscape of talent management in the digital age.

2.6.1.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Theory

According to Marikyan and Papagiannides (2023), the primary objective of the TAM is to shed light on the processes underpinning the acceptance of technology, in order to predict the behaviour of and provide a theoretical explanation for the successful implementation of technology. The practical objective of the TAM is to inform practitioners about measures that they might take prior to the implementation of systems. To fulfil the objectives of the theory, several steps are to be carried out.

According to Davis (1989), technology acceptance is a three-stage process, whereby external factors (system design features) trigger cognitive responses (perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness), which, in turn, form an effective response (attitude toward using technology/intention), influencing use behaviour (Davis, 1989). The TAM represents the behaviour, as the outcome predicted by perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and behavioural intention. Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness capture the expectations of positive behavioural outcomes and the belief that behaviour will not be labour consuming (Davis, 1989). The development of the model and measures for technology acceptance have made significant theoretical contributions and have had a great practical value.

The application of the model for testing IS usability has made it possible to evaluate the motivation of users to adopt a range of technologies which have not been done before due to a lack of validated subjective measures. The development of constructs which had a strong and significant correlation with use behaviour made it possible to understand the cognitive and affective factors mediating the effect of system characteristics on technology acceptance (Davis, 1989).

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Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the technology acceptance model (TAM) can be applied to explore and investigate how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry, as the TAM suggests that the acceptance and usage of technology is influenced by two main factors: perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness.

2.6.1.3 Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

According to Gordon (2023), the resource-based view (RBV) is a theoretical framework used in research studies, and it focuses on how an organisation's unique resources and capabilities can lead to sustained competitive advantage, or how organisations are able to establish competitive advantage through internal resources of the firm that are valuable, rare, not imitable, and organised for value capture.

When applied in a research study, the RBV model helps in understanding how an organisation's internal resources contribute to its performance and competitive advantage (Gordon, 2023).

For the purpose of this study, the resource-based view (RBV) will assist the researcher to identify how internal resources and capabilities, including technological resources, can be a source of competitive advantage in the South African Telecommunications Industry, and explore how talent management practitioners can leverage these resources (emerging technologies as available resources to enhance talent management practices) in the telecommunications industry. In this context, the study aims to explore how the effective utilisation of emerging technologies can contribute to enhance talent management practices.

This will be useful as the researcher aims to collect data and develop theories that emerge from the data. The aim of this study is to explore how new technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices.

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An integration of all of the above theories: innovation diffusion theory (IDT), the technology acceptance model (TAM) theory and the resource-based view (RBV) theory will assist the researcher in identifying the talent management practices and emerging technologies applicable, specifically in the South African Telecommunications Industry, and analyse how these technologies can be adopted in the talent management cycle. At the same time the researcher will explore how the identified technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry, whilst managing the adoption rate of these new technologies in talent management practices.

2.7 Conclusion of Literature Review

The above review of literature reveals that talent management is one of the key intellectual capitals in the telecommunications industry. An integrated approach to talent management affords organisations the advantage to win the war on talent. Secondly, the telecommunications industry is characterised by technologies, however during times of crisis, the industry suffers as much as all other industries. The telecommunications industry should regard new technologies as an asset and utilise it to optimise competitive advantage. However, the literature review indicates the opposite. During Covid-19 major telecommunications organisations felt the effect of the pandemic, like any other industry, despite the plethora of technologies available in their industry. Furthermore, the above literature review reveals that integrating new technologies with talent management practices has the potential to give organisations in the telecommunications industry a competitive advantage. Digital talent management is a fusion of technology in management practices that enable an organisation to better source, screen, select, develop and deploy talent.

In conclusion, this review clearly reveals that using new technologies has the potential to enhance talent management practices in the telecommunications industry. What is required is for organisations to upskill and reskill talent managers in order to optimise the use of new technologies and develop new strategies that give them an edge over competitors.

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3 CHAPTER 3 THREE- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

The aim of this study is to answer the following question “How can emerging technologies be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the telecommunications industry? This section of the study seeks to outline ‘how’ the aforesaid question would be answered empirically. Below is an exposition of the research methodology to be used for this purpose.

According to Attard (2018), the methodology section in a research study is a crucial part of a research study and ultimately of the thesis/dissertation itself. This section of the study outlines clearly the data that will be collected and how it will be analysed and interpreted. Basias and Pollalis (2018) point out that researchers have to choose a research method, approaches and techniques that can be used to develop a suitable research framework. Bryman (2012) points out that a study can be conducted using different research designs, viz. qualitative, quantitative or mixed method approaches. This study adopts a qualitative research design using the interpretive paradigm. According to Aluko (2006), qualitative research is an effective and suitable strategy for studying human behaviour in social contexts. The study on leveraging new technologies to enhance talent management practices is situated within a social setting and therefore the qualitative research design is proposed.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to George (2021), exploratory research is a methodology approach that investigates research questions that have not previously been studied in depth.

The author further explains that exploratory research is often qualitative and primary in nature. However, a study with a large sample conducted in an exploratory manner can be quantitative as well. It is also often referred to as interpretive research or a grounded theory approach due to its flexible and open-ended nature.

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For the purpose of this study the researcher will be using an exploratory research design in order to gain insights on exploring and investigating how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008) point out that there are a number of methods that can be used to collect research data in qualitative research. These include observations, textual or visual analysis and interviews. Data for this research study will be collected using semi-structured interviews. According to Oflazoglu (2017), semi-structured interviews are a method of gathering qualitative data that combine elements of both structured and unstructured interviews, thus providing the researcher with an opportunity to gather comprehensive data through a flexible process that accommodates both structured and semi-structured interviews. This semi-structured interview method fosters a comfortable environment that enables participants to share their thoughts and experiences, leading to richer and more detailed data. Data will be collected using both telephonic and face-to-face interviews with the respondents.

3.3.1 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

This study will be using semi-structured interviews to collect data. Therefore, both telephonic using MS Teams and face-to face interviews will be scheduled for one hour with each participant and an interview guide will be used. Open ended questions that are aimed at responding to the research objectives will be predetermined and captured in the interview guide. ***(Appendix A)***

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLE

It is important for the researcher to determine the population parameters of the proposed study before establishing a sample. The population parameters include the nature, size and unique characteristics of the population. According to Wrona and

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Gunnesh (2016), the selection of respondents in a study is very important. Correctly selected respondents are likely to provide data that is useful for the study. For the purpose of the study the overall population will be talent practitioners in the telecommunications sector in South Africa.

3.4.1 TARGET POPULATION

The target population for the proposed study are talent management practitioners or alternatively referred to as talent managers in the telecommunications industry in Gauteng. Talent management practitioners are involved in the planning and execution of their organisations' recruitment strategies; therefore, they own the talent management process and possess information that is useful for the proposed study.

3.4.2 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD

According to Wagner, Kawulich and Garner (2012), there are two sampling techniques, namely probability and non-probability sampling. Some of the most common types of non-probability sampling techniques are convenience sampling, snowball sampling and purposive sampling (Creswell, 2018). This qualitative study will adopt the non-probability technique and sampling will be by way of purposive sampling (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner 2012). According to Cresswell (2018), purposeful sampling relates to "individuals and sites". Bryman (2012) concurs that in essence, "this type of sampling focuses on the selection of units or [unit of analysis] such as people, organisations [and] documents". The decision on the unit to be sampled depends on the research question to be answered (Bryman, 2012). For the purpose of the study a purposeful sampling method will be used. Expert sampling with the aim of selecting those respondents who have the experience and knowledge of talent management in the telecommunications industry will be used. Expert sampling (or judgment sampling) is where you draw your sample from experts in the field that you are studying (Singh 2007). Therefore twelve (12) talent practitioners will be purposefully selected to participate in the study. This is based on the fact that there are only four (4) telecommunications companies in South Africa, which limits

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the number of participants. However with this number a comparative analysis from different contexts will be possible, with quality data that will lead to more insightful findings.

3.5 PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

The researcher obtained ethics clearance from the university before embarking on the data collection journey. Secondly, the researcher requested permission from the organisations where the study was conducted, and finally, consent was sought from the selected individual talent managers. Again, during the interviews, respondents were reminded of their consent and the researcher further indicated that participation in the interview was voluntary. To protect the participant's privacy, codes are used to protect their identity.

During data collection, each respondent was asked the same questions as the rest of the respondents.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGIES AND INTERPRETATION

Cresswell (2018) points out that qualitative data consists of words or pictures, therefore it can be analysed using different approaches. In the study data was analysed using thematic and categorical analysis. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) describe thematic analysis as the process used to identify patterns or themes within qualitative data. Therefore, the researcher will look for themes from the collected data during the analysis.

The data obtained from the interviews was first be transcribed and then explored to get the general sense before breaking it into parts. Qualitative research involves a simultaneous process of analysing data whilst also collecting data (Creswell, 2018). Therefore data analysis begins as soon as the process of data collection begins. The researcher wrote notes and also asked probing questions during the interviews in order to get the true reflection of data. Upon collecting all of the data, the researcher used both thematic analysis and constant comparative analysis to identify

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recurring patterns and themes, whilst continuously comparing new data with the previous themed data. The researcher also used memoing to write reflective notes about insights as the data is analysed. According to Groenewald (2012), memoing is the act of recording reflective notes about what the researcher (fieldworker, data coder and/or analyst) is learning from the data.

The researcher used Microsoft Forms and Excel. Even though they are not specifically designed for qualitative analysis, they can be used to organise and manage codes and themes.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations and challenges of the study may include positionality. The researcher is currently residing in Gauteng, specifically in Johannesburg, and the proximity to some respondents may limit the study. Secondly, this study faced limitations in terms of the number of respondents. There is a limited number of telecommunications firms and thus this posed a challenge for the researcher to access the required number of respondents.

3.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE

The HSRC (2021) points out that in a research context, quality assurance (QA) refers to strategies and policies for ensuring that data integrity, quality and reliability are maintained at every stage of the study. This includes strategies for preventing errors from entering the datasets, taking precautions before data is collected, and establishing procedures while data is used in a study. Having quality assurance practices in place helps for compliance and also when evaluating your own research and data management practices to produce the best results possible (HSRC, 2021).

3.8.1 Transferability

Transferability of the study enables determination of whether the results can be applied to different contexts. Comprehensive description of the research process and

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data will ensure that the proposed study can be transferable and applicable in other contexts, besides the sites where the study would have been conducted.

In this study the researcher provided a rich description of participants' responses, and the researcher's interpretations of the data collected thus making transferability easier to evaluate, thus appearing transferable in the eyes of the reader.

Quality assurance in research also includes:

3.8.2 Credibility

Credibility or internal validity of a study is determined by the aspect of truth-value, which is ensured through sustained involvement, persistence observation, triangulation, and member check (Kortsjens & Moser, 2018). As a result, the researcher spent more time with the participants during the interview. The goal was to become familiar with the context so that the researcher can collect detailed descriptive data. To further ensure credibility, the researcher utilised probing questions during semi-structured interviews to urge participants to support their responses based on their experience and exposure, as they are experts in the field.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is the ability to identify whether an investigation's conclusions would be consistently repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the similar individuals in similar situations. N this study, the researcher verified that the findings were consistent with the raw data collected. This therefore means that, an external researcher can examine the data to establish whether they can reach similar results, analyses and conclusions about the data and thus challenge how data analysis and interpretation were conducted. To enhance dependability of the proposed study, the research methodology, data collection and analysis methods are outlined in detail to mitigate bias in the study. By so doing the researcher wanted to ensure that the research process is traceable, documented and logical.

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3.8.4 Comfortability

According to Lincoln and Guba (2016), conformability is ensuring that the data is a product of participants' responses and not the researcher's biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives. In this study the researcher is very transparent and open to the audits of the data collected and what it will be used for as the researcher did inform the participants that the report can be shared upon request.

3.8.5 Authenticity

Authenticity is to ensure that the data represents a fair range of differing viewpoints (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). In this study the researcher targeted respondents who are actually talent management practitioners in the four big telecommunications giants in the South African telecommunications industry in order to gain different viewpoints.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are an essential part of the research process. According to Macmillan and Schumacher (2001), ethical considerations in research involve considering what is proper or improper, right or wrong conduct when undertaking a research project. Ethical considerations are essential for any research to ensure that participants' rights are protected. Firstly, the researcher applied for ethics clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of the Wits Business School prior to commencing with the study. Secondly, the researcher requested permission to conduct research from the selected telecommunications firms in the Gauteng Province. Thirdly, an informed consent letter/form was designed in which the aim, methodology and dissemination of data was outlined to the prospective participants for completion prior to the interviews. In addition, this form outlines and highlights participants' rights to participate in the study voluntarily or to withdraw at any time if they so wish. Furthermore, pseudonyms and codes were used in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and the firms.

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4 CHAPTER FOUR - PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this section is the presentation of the findings from the data that has been collected using semi-structured interviews. The data is based on the responses gathered from a targeted group of talent management practitioners who are in different roles and are involved in different practices of the talent management cycle. These processes include recruitment and selection, learning and development, performance management, succession planning and retention. The findings are presented using thematic analysis based on dependent and independent variables for each research objective. Thematic analysis is applied to identify common themes, overarching impressions from the data with the aim of finding common patterns across the data sets and patterns that came up repeatedly. The researcher has also used segmentation according to the categories of the target population, with the intent to position and connect the categories in order to analyse the bulk of the data cohesively. It should also be noted that the researcher used codes to identify and segment the different telecommunications companies as follows:

- M001- M003
- V001 – V003
- T001 – T003
- C001 – C003

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4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

TELCO	GENDER	DEMOGRAPHIC
V001-V003	Female	Coloured
	Female	Black
	Female	Indian
M001 – M003	Male	Black
	Female	Black
	Female	Black
T001 – T003	Male	Black
	Female	White
	Female	Indian
C001 - C003	Female	Indian
	Female	Black
	Female	Coloured

4.3 Findings pertaining to each Research Objectives

4.3.1 To explore emerging technologies from the Talent Management practices' perspective.

- **Technology Utilization**

In order to understand and explore emerging technologies from a talent management practice's perspective, the respondents were asked how they utilise and integrate technology across the different talent management practices such, succession planning, and employee engagement and retention in their respective organisations and this is how they responded:

> *"So, our organisation does utilise technology through a technology-driven platform called **"Grow",** which integrates Artificial Intelligence (AI) which allows for all our employees to have access to a variety of learning interventions and programmes that is linked to their roles and career aspirations.**"-(V001, p5)***

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"In terms of talent management, we use a technology-driven platform to identify and develop talent. So, for example, we have a platform called ***"Grow"*** *that utilises Artificial Intelligence (AI) to sort of set up employee's skills profiles based on their experience, their current and their previous roles within the organisations. The system then uses AI to compile a skills profile with different proficiency levels that an employee can rate themselves against. So, for example, they'll rate whether they are beginner or they're professional or expert level, et cetera* ***- (V002,p 4)***

*You know, we utilise a lot of technology within our organisation, a lot more than I expected when I joined, and you know I'm new to the organisation. So, a lot of technology is being utilised from a Talent Management point of view and from an HR point of view, in Talent Acquisition specifically. And you know, we've got a number of systems and the platforms that we utilise from video interviews on Salva, though what we do in an 8-hour day is on success factors and how we move candidates through a journey****"-(V003,p 5)***

"*We have just recently embarked on a journey with regard to integrating technology into our processes within talent management, fairly new with utilising success factors, but with very minimal integration, as most of what we do is still very manual currently. We have just added a talent management feature on the new system; however, we haven't fully utilised it as yet. We are still more on Excel and PowerPoint at the moment.****"-C001,p 3)***

*"Oh, so currently I would say that it's quite minimal. We only recently implemented a new system where we've incorporated the talent management module and because most of what we do in the talent management space is still a desktop exercise on Excel or PowerPoint****."-"- (C002,p 4)***

"*We have recently implemented a system which has been integrated across HR, but it is not fully utilised across our HR processes. Most of our processes are still very manual, as we basically make use of Microsoft Office, which I think you're familiar with, which includes your Excel, PowerPoint.****"-(C003, p 5)***

"*We do make use of Technology in the organisation specifically within Talent Management and leverage of the fact that we are a technology company with a lot of technology at our disposal that we can leverage off.****" -(T001, p3)***

"*Yes, we do use SAP SuccessFactors as our main platform for all our talent management practices and as well as for learning as we have a majority of our programmes on LMS (Success Factors).****" -(T002, p 5)***

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"OK in general, in terms of technology, we do have an integrated technology-driven system Success Factors that manages most of our talent management practices end-to-end from recruitment, development and how we manage performance. I must say though, in as much as we are embracing technology, there are still other parts of Talent Management where we apply manual interventions and that's where the gap is." ***-(T003, p 5)***

"So, there is a technology-driven platform we're using currently, we moved to Oracle to manage everything end-to-end. For example, performance management, succession planning, everything has been moved to Oracle, however we are using different types of tools to measure. It depends on what you want to measure in Talent Management" ***-(M001, p 4)***

"We have sort of really gone through a 360 in terms of transformation, when it comes to the use of technology to enable our talent management practices. So, we currently use HCM, the Human Capital Management system and it is underpinned by Oracle. We do have personal development plans, right, which are also attached to performance management, although it is a standalone process on HCM" ***(M002, p6)***

"So, in our organisation, we are using HCM which is not the greatest system, but I guess it does what it needs to do in terms of managing performance and managing the talent database, right? For example, when we are recruiting, we need to do the talent mapping, we need to check. Do we have the talent within the organisation? If we do not have it, where do we have the talent?" ***-(M003, p 5)***

- **Succession Planning**

"And so, this is a process in place which is linked to the talent review process. We have what we call our top talent employees and those are identified successors who form part of our Succession slate with an indication of their succession readiness and destination role. But this is however done manually where all people leaders for a specific business unit basically sit together and discuss the talent or successes or high potential employees for that specific business unit at this stage. This manual process is called talent forums which is a desktop exercise with the use of Excel and PowerPoint currently with no technology intervention at all." ***-(V001, p24)***

"For this process, there aren't really any technology driven tools that we use to identify successors for critical roles. The process is still a bit manual as we sit in

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*talent forums with spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations with the names of the identified talent, captured with an indication of their succession readiness with a destination role or roles identified. This is quite a manual process and all people leaders for a specific business unit sit together to discuss talent, discuss successors as well as high potential employees for that specific business unit.**"--(V002, p 15)***

"**Yeah, that this is a process where I see the gap in terms of using technology in the organisation, for example when in talent acquisition we want to fill a role with an internal employee based on succession slates per business unit, it's not recorded on any system that we can easily access, but you have to ask the HRBP for that specific business unit to provide you with the data that comes in Excel and PowerPoint**"- (V003,p 17)

"**Because we use the Oracle platform, everyone is supposed to build their profile and create an account. So, we can identify and see what capabilities the individual has. Where are the developmental gaps? The capabilities that we want to build for them and to look for programmes for them will link to learning, link to everything and compile programmes that are relevant to you as an individual, and these development interventions are aimed at fast-tracking our identified successor's readiness for the next role.**"-(M001,p 16)

"**So, what I'm currently doing is I'm working with the HCM team as well because we're building this succession model right for HCM. so, the capability is there, obviously we have to tailor, make it to suit the needs that we would want in MTN and obviously to speak to what it is that we're trying to achieve through succession management.**"-(M002, p 23)

"**Uh, when it comes to our organisation and that part, I think it's still lacking. So, this is based again on it's not, 100% system driven where you can say I've identified talent from, what I mean is from end-to-end process that is still lacking. It is still a manual process where you still need to go and have conversations with the executives in Talent forums who are the people that you think are the successors and there's nothing that you can say. This information is manually locked on the system where the executives can just identify the successors. In so doing, they're able to say why this person is identified as a successor, what kind of development is required, then it becomes a conversation**"M003, p19)

***"**Currently the process again is very manual, for example all line managers from each business unit will sit in talent forums to discuss their top talent, identify HiPo's and successors with even destination roles. All of this is done manually*

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*on Excel and PowerPoint. These discussions, tend to be subjective at times with a lot of biases.**"-C001, p 14)***

"**So, with an integrated system, that works extremely well, because you will have a view of employees that were identified as top talent. And you know, with a talent management framework that works; with that you will get an understanding of where they are in terms of their development gaps and what training is earmarked for remark training, and what they've completed. However, currently succession planning is still a manual exercise that is not system-driven,**"- (C002, p16)

"**You know this process is very manual. As a result, you don't know if it's accurate or not, but if we had an integrated system, you would know who your top talent is, as well as identified successors, their succession readiness and destination role.**"- (C003, p14)

"**In terms of our succession planning, this is a very manual process, as this is done through talent discussions by people leaders per business unit and that gets translated into an Excel spreadsheet that is kept by the HRBP to give an overview of identified Talent and Successors in the specific business unit.**" - (T001, p12)

"**It definitely does help firstly from a tracking and reporting perspective that at least we have a central repository. The hindrance though or the downside that maybe we're not fully utilising yet is more the searching across the business for that and the talent pools.**"-(T002, p14)

"**Based on the ratings that are captured on the system, line managers and HRBP's can see whose talent there is. However, there is also a bit of manual intervention as talent ratings are discussed in talent forums with a full view of who has been identified as top talent or HiPos. The actual succession list is recorded manually on Excel spreadsheets and PowerPoint.**"- (T003,p13)

- **Engagement and Retention**

***"**So as mentioned, this is a big focus for us as part of our listening strategy that prioritises employee engagement, and for this we use digital engagement surveys that allow the organisation to get feedback from employees on how they are engaged and managed by their leaders, as well as how their leaders lead their teams in alignment to our leadership standards. And these are set by the organisation itself, so, some of the digital tools used for feedback, as previously mentioned, are the 360 and feedback tool which is also technology driven. I do*

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*believe that there's still more that we can do in terms of enhancing our engagement processes, yeah**."V001, p27)***

"**OK, so we do have quite a few others. So as part of our listening strategy and employee engagement, we use Spirit beat surveys in partnership with Humu which is a digital platform and that allows the organisation to get feedback from the employees on how their leaders keep them engaged and how they lead their teams in alignment to the leadership standards set out by the organisation through their display of the Spirit of Vodacom behaviours. One of the digital tools used for feedback is, as I've mentioned before, the 360-feedback tool. We also make use of a platform called Vodafone Stars. Through these two platforms line managers and peers are able to provide feedback and recognition and this allows the employee to then receive this feedback in real time rather than having to wait or receive this feedback during a performance review session. And the Vodafone Stars platform also allows the manager to give monetary recognition for an employee's exceptional performance at any point in time.**"-- (V002, p 18)

"**I mean, you know in this aspect, there's a lot that we're doing as an organisation to keep our employees engaged. For example, we do our Pulse and Spirit beat surveys through digital platforms and as part of our listening strategy. We also do CEO townhall sessions where all employees across our footprint can join these important conversations though technology-driven platforms.**"- (V003,p 19)

"**Currently to keep our employees engaged, we use surveys to keep our staff engaged and get to understand the pulse of the organisation. CEO townhall sessions also form part of our listening strategy. However, there are no technology-driven initiatives that form part of our engagement and retention strategy.**"-(C001, p 18)

*"Yeah, for us it will take a while before we can really, really get that level, especially with regard to employee engagement. If we had a system that works for employees, you know it, and sometimes I say that it's about getting your basics right. You know, because if your basics are not right, even if you get something fancy, it usually doesn't work if not utilised properly. Start having a system that employees can use to look into their information. At this point we have no system that really works to capture employee data that they would capture to share their views and opinions**"–(C002, p17)***

***"**At this stage, currently there's no technology-driven platform to integrate, as even our CEO sessions are physically on campus. But when we have the system,*

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*it is going to start hopefully giving us or allowing us to capture everything. Currently there is not a linkage onto the system and we're not able to get that type of information.**"-(C003,p14)***

"**We launched something called Move. It was supposed to be, you know, like an employee engagement platform where employees could load their stories. They could show us what they were cooking and share recipes or anything you can do, anything you could load, and you could engage with all of our executives. You could, you know, executives could engage with people. However, this is no longer active**"-(M001,p15)

"**So, look here I will say that there is room for improvement, although we have certain technologies that are currently in place that bring about engagement and keeps people motivated. So, we have a platform that is called SHINE right, and SHINE is where we recognise our people in real time, as and when it happens, we call it a kudos system, right? So, if I've worked with you, I can go on there and I can go and send a kudos which has monetary value, because you can use the points to sort of get other things, right.**"- (M002, p19)

*"We do conduct surveys to get to understand where people are at, and this is system driven. For example, upon receiving the outcomes of the survey, I must go and present in different departments. Now I need to slice and dice the report. You know everything. It comes from the system. It's done by Willis and Towers, right? It's not as if it's our system, but everything is there. It's easily accessible. I'm able to see in terms of gender. Are people happy in terms of race? You know who are responding in a certain way.**"-(M003,p17)***

"**We used to have our own internal social media page called Workplace that works like Facebook, but unfortunately it no longer exists now. So, this is an area where we are falling short, as we have no other means of engagement that are technology- driven, except for making use of CEO townhall sessions to engage employees, where some employees will physically attend. However, in order to reach out to all employees, we use technology to link all employees across the country to connect with the CEO and interact live throughout the session."**T001, p14)

"**Umm yes, I think we can do more there. But we do have a lot just from general communication, general engagements with a lot of our internal processes, so everything is then online.**"-T002, p17)

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"So, we have exit interviews that we do like I said. Part of our recruitment system does allow for certain activities to take place online. And part of this we do basically capture the reasons and have interviews so as to sit down and try to clarify what the actual reason is." ***-(T003, p15)***

In conclusion, the talent management practitioners from the leading telecommunications companies seem to have put technological advancements in some of their talent management practices and these will be discussed in Chapter 5.

4.3.2 To identify the Talent Management practices applicable specifically in the South African Telecommunications industry.

In identifying the different talent management practices that are applicable in the South African Telecommunications Industry, the respondents were asked about their roles in the talent management cycle and how they integrate technology in their processes. Below is a presentation of their responses:

- **Roles and Responsibility**

"Okay, my role entails managing and delivering functional skills programs for the different roles across different levels for the organisation... So, in a nutshell, I'm responsible for driving skills transformation." ***-(V001, p3)***

"*So, as mentioned, I am in the Talent Management space. Specifically, My role is to basically manage and monitor the entire Talent and Performance management process within our organization. So, this includes educating, facilitating and sort of almost creating awareness on how we manage and reward performance within the organisation in a nutshell."* ***- (V002, p 2)***

"*So, my role is being responsible for Talent Acquisition at all levels and managed the team who do all the recruitment for the organisation. Ideally, from a Talent Management point of view I should be working closely with our talent management colleagues in terms of understanding succession planning as an example retention as an example."* ***- (V003,p 3)***

"*Hey, I look after Talent Management and Learning as well as the OD function and included in that is also Performance Management."* ***-(C002, p3)***

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"My role is within the Retail space fully responsible for the Learning and Development strategy for the organisation and ensuring that I deliver learning interventions that are fit for purpose and aligned to our strategic objectives," - ***(T003, p 5)***

"So, I'm responsible for leadership Development across the different Leadership levels and for the development of young talent, which is your graduate or interns also responsible for succession management as well." ***- (M001, p 6)***

My role is to ensure that I do a training needs analysis for the Business Unit to identify the critical skills of the future. This is to ensure that we have the right talent of people with the right skills at the right time." ***- (T001, p 4)***

"Hey, I look after Talent and Performance Management organisation wide, and I operate within the Centre of Excellence. My role is also to design and develop frameworks and processes on how we manage talent and performance within the organisation." ***- (C001, p 3)***

"But our team is responsible basically for sourcing and attracting Talent into the organisation and also fill in internal vacancies with talented employees within the organization." ***- (C003, p 4)***

I am in the Centre of Excellence and I'm responsible for talent management and learning and development." ***-(T002, p 3)***

"OK, my role encompasses is to one, work closely with our recruiting partners so that we go out into the market, and we look for the right talent and right fit to for the organisation. Then there's more business as usual, elements obviously which is to ensure that within areas of business units that we, understand what the business strategy is, understanding what are the type of skills capabilities that are required in that space from a Learning and Development perspective, conduct assessments in terms of skills and the gaps thereof." ***-(M002, p 5)***

"OK, my role is to ensure that in terms of the organizational designs from the structures, restructuring, posting of the roles, that's what I basically do as well as setting up frameworks as a standard to monitor how Performance is managed in the organisation." ***-(M003, p 4)***

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- **Recruitment and Selection**

Recruitment and selection as a talent management practice plays a crucial role in ensuring that the organisation has a talented workforce that is fit-for-purpose, and that on its own requires very efficient recruitment process and procedures. A high-level overview of recruitment and selection processes is conducted in the four major Telcos in South Africa and is presented below:

> ***"****OK, so if I can just use the example again of the "Grow" platform which has really enhanced our recruitment and selection process specifically for internal vacancies and promotions in such a way that when there's any active vacancy with a specific skill, our recruitment team then first checks on our existing skills profile internally before they go outside. So, on Grow platform and where there's relevant skills match, and the candidate can be targeted and approached for an interview and that actually shortens our recruitment process, and this also helped to retain talent internally rather than recruiting externally****."-(V001, p 3)***
>
> ***"****Okay, so as I mentioned, you know the Grow platform is an AI enabled platform. And so, this has both major enhancements, specifically in our recruitment and selection process, most specifically towards for our internal vacancies.****"*** *what they'll do is they'll prioritize our internal employees based on their skills profiles that they've captured on the platform and then where there's a relevant skill match. They will then approach or proactively approach the internal candidate before they even apply for the role.****"- (V002, p 6).***
>
> ***"****Umm, from a Talent Acquisition point of view it really does help simplify our processes. It helps with time saving. You know, as an example, we do interview scheduling through a system, right? So instead of having that being done manually, it's done through a system which obviously saves us time. It talks to efficiencies within our practice, but it also from any candidate point of view. Remember, we want to attract candidates who want to work for a technically savvy organization.****"- (V003,p 5)***
>
> ***"****I think it has reduced a lot of biasness. Firstly, it has reduced a bit of biasness because think about it, we are all biased as human beings, so it has reduced a bit of biasness because now you just create your profile and load your CV's and videos on the system and you just send the links to people and they respond and they do everything on the technology and the and the technology will adjust, give*

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*you the best of the best based on how they responded to the questions.**"-(M001, p 6)***

"**So, you know, previously it used to be the traditional way of a role becomes vacant, recruitment partner loads it and follows the recruitment process manually using recruitment packs but now we have turned things around with the use of technology where the process is shortened drastically.**" -(M002, p 5)

"**So, again, the HCM I think has come in handy because things were done manually in the past right, for example from the recruitment pack, logging the details of a vacancy, now everything has been automated on a technology - driven system including onboarding as well, that has been automated. People used to receive tons of papers where they needed to sign and came with lots of admin right, so now it's done on the system, which has made life easier.**"- (M003, p 6)

"**So, with our recruitment process, there is a technology-driven system in place as I remember myself when I was recruited into this role, I applied through LinkedIn which is an indication that the organisation does utilise social media platforms to advertise roles and manage the application process. There is also technology behind this process as when you apply on LinkedIn, it automatically redirects you to the internal career portal which I believe recruiters have access to.**"- (C001, p 4)

"**So, I know that the recruitment team does have a system that they use, but it's also just being used for managing applications as well as, we are shortlisting and sending feedback I think, and I want to believe that you know when the applicant/ candidate has not made it, then they send sort of like communication using the system.**" -(C002, p 4)

"**We currently have a system in place Hire View that currently assist us in advertising vacancies internally and externally we use social media like LinkedIn which then all our social media platforms are linked to our internal system. The system assists in doing the shortlist based on the requirements of the role.**"- (C003, p 3)

"**Technology links the social media platforms to our internal career portal on Success Factors. We also make use of technology to conduct virtual interviews where we interview candidates from anywhere and they don't have to physically come to our offices.**" -(T001, p 4)

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> *"On the recruitment side, it's still fairly new for us or parts of the business. So one part of the business has used the technology for a longer time on the other areas of the business like a consumer division and so on that we have not been using the online this platform for very long, we've migrated last year."* ***- (T002, p3***

> *"In the Recruitment space, I know they currently have a system in place, can't remember what it's called, but it assists in advertising vacancies both internally and externally. And I know for sure externally we make use of social media platforms like LinkedIn which then all our social media platforms are linked to our internal system."* ***-(T003, p 4)***

In conclusion, the talent practitioners acknowledged the existence of recruitment and selection processes in their individual Telcos, and these will be further discussed in the next section of the study.

- ***Learning and Development***

Below is how learning and development as a practice integrates technology within the main 4 Telecoms in South Africa:

> *"Okay, so our Learning Management System (LMS) has a variety of e-learning programs available for all employees now as mentioned, there are also self-paced learning programs that provide skills at different proficiency levels". "For example, our software engineering programs, which starts from beginners' level to expert levels and employees can then enrol themselves on any of these programs."- -(V001, p 15)*

> *"Mhhh, with regards to Learning and Development how we build skills capability, our learning management system (LMS which is SuccessFactors is loaded with a variety of eLearning programs that are available for all our employees in the organization across all the levels. And these programs are basically self-paced learning programmes that provides skills at different proficiency levels. So, you can start from beginner phase all the way up to the expert level and employees can enrol themselves on any programme based on the skill level that they either require for now in their current roles or for future roles."- (V002, p 10)*

> *"Look, I do believe that we develop talent. I mean, our programs within leadership development etcetera certainly believe that they exist and are they connected to your learning and development plan. I'm not sure if technology is*

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*utilised, so we do assessments to your point, we do psychometric assessments during the recruitment process.**"- (V003,p 14).***

"**If it wasn't for technology, there would not be any learning and development. So, through platforms like teams zoom, we're able to continue with sessions, so classroom learning went onto zooms, went into teams.**"- (M001, p 16)

"**So, one of the things that has happened, you know is that and we have found particularly with our area which is Oracle University managed by Oracle they manage that system, meaning that they have to be abreast of technological changes that happen from an Oracle perspective. And obviously Oracle is responding to where the markets are moving towards from a technology point of view, right? That is specific to that department only because nobody else in any of the other and in the other organization uses Oracle University. So, they have Oracle University and it's got clearly defined learning journeys**"-(M002, p 15)

"**Yeah. So you see some of the courses, the online courses for example, I mean where you do not need a facilitator, people are able to do those online courses at their own pace, their own time and it has helped a lot as well for example there is a program about developing women and rising leaders, I was part of that program and most of the things were done online , I mean also thanks to COVID where everything was done online where I did not have to go to boardrooms to attend the certain program you attend for that hour and you are able to go back to work.**"- (M003, p 17)

"**You know when it comes to skills development, I can safely say we are heading at the right direction. Like I said before, we have a Learning management system which is Success Factors that houses thousands of learning interventions that our employees have access to. These are self-paced eLearning programmes that can be accessed from any device. The cherry on top is that the system is integrated into LinkedIn learning which that on its own is another hub of learning interventions that employees have access to with different proficiency levels.**"- (C001, p 14)

"**For skills, we do have a portion of it managed through a system and it really does help as well as using what we've sort of like the previously integrated LinkedIn learning into what we do for skills and for recording and for providing reports as well, because it's sort of like helps with providing you with insights in terms of one, usage to how many employees have completed two, what learning interventions and just making sure skills comes with a huge admin burden**"- (C002. p15)

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> ***"****We currently have LinkedIn learning which is basically integrated as a learning path for our employees basically through our internal learning management system (LMS), Our LMS is useful in recording, and it provides you reports of training that has been done and completed by our employees.****" -(C003, p 12)***

> ***"****In the Learning and Development environment, we got to realize that our employees are no longer interested in getting into a classroom environment to learn, we make use of technology to facilitate virtual classes where participants can learn in the comfort of their own homes or offices. We make use of a technology-driven MS Teams and Adobe Connect to facilitate virtual lessons.****"-(T001, p 15)***

> ***"****We we're trying to build a strong learning culture, learning for growth culture and one of the things that we've done is we've got our online learning platform that's integrated. So, we've got, and it has over 30,000 online learning content that's integrated into our SAP SuccessFactors that's then available to all permanent employees.****"-(T002, p14)***

> ***"****We currently have LinkedIn learning which is basically integrated as a learning path for our employees basically through our internal learning management system (LMS), Our LMS is useful in recording, and it provides you reports of training that has been done and completed by our employees.****" -(T003, p 15)***

In conclusion, the practitioners agreed in response to the existence of learning and development processes and technology integration in their respective Telcos and these will be further discussed in the next section of the study.

- **Performance Management**

Performance management as a talent management practice is how an organisation manages performance of its employees by setting clear expectations and providing ongoing feedback and development opportunities. With regard to this practice, below is the representation of the findings:

> *"Like I said, we have a Performance Management tool which is technology driven and this forms part of the previous question that I answered where I alluded to Grow my Impact which is or Performance Management tool. So, this tool specifically auto manages and monitors the end-to end performance management process within the organization. For example, from the goal setting*

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process to goal contracting with the line managers, quarterly reviews and mid-year reviews, self-assessments, performance reviews, peer to peer reviews and just to mention a few and our final year end reviews as well as the rating and the feedback received." ***- (V001, p 19)***

"*Oh, okay so, as mentioned before, our AI enabled platform has five subsections. One of them is Grow my Impact. So, Grow my Impact is a performance management tool which is technology driven. The tool automates basically the entire performance management process from your goal setting stage, all of all the way up until your reviews in the final year or your final year end reviews and this also comes with pre-set timelines throughout the cycles that also get sent out, the system sends out reminders to our employees and line managers to also keep track of which key milestones are happening in which period.****"- (V002,p 10)***

"*I think look, I mean we've got a system in place to ensure that all our performance measures are set and clearly defined. The entire cycle of PD is technology- driven, we have a platform called Grow my Impact that we utilize which I think is great.****"- (V003,p 19)***

"*Technology has provided the ability for both line and employee to continuously go in and have proper check ins, unlike back in the days where you never know where you are so you can continuously go and have check INS go into the system, have some notes, write down where you are, whatever you're feeling. If there's great things you've done, some achievements, some developments that are happening, some learnings that you've achieved, you go and you input into the system, that's the power of technology and then you don't need to wait for end of the year to discuss it. your line manager can have access to that anytime you've got access to your performance.****"-(M001. p 17)***

"*Yeah. So, look, when it comes to performance management, and with the introduction of HCM which is our employee sort of self-service platform, anything and everything that they need to do with it, be learning whether be, just their everyday benefits like leave and so forth, it happens on the system.****"-(M002, p 15)***

"*So, that is done on the system and where you will get everyone's Performance outcomes that will be performance ratings in other companies. So, in that case, again, it limits the time where you need to do things manually to get people to do their conversation. So, you can track the reporting. It means you can check where certain areas of the business are lacking behind, you're able to send the stats*

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*and show them that the things that needs that where you where you are still lagging what you need to do with your teams.**" –(M003, p 17)***

"**I'll be very honest with you, line managers are not using the system at all, that creates a huge gap when it comes to leveraging technology. The entire process is manual as it is done outside of the system currently. Currently from the goal setting and contracting between employee and line manager, that's all desktop on Excel documents, Word documents and PowerPoint slides.**"-(C001, p 12)

"**Yes, we do have a system for managing performance, managing goal setting, managing performance, reviews, managing check INS that we do have. But I think more than anything, everything lies outside of the system with performance you need to have a workforce that is in tune with like you know, that will sort of like embrace and the understanding of why we doing performance in the manner that we are doing it for the system to work because you can have state of the art system that is capable of doing just about anything, but if line managers don't use it, and employees don't actually uses it?**"-(C002, p14)

"**OK, for managing performance of staff in terms of goal setting, reviews, check-ins and that type of thing, there is a system in place however in reality everything is outside of the system that we currently use as most of the performance management process is still completed manually. For example, it takes you back to that manual process where everything needs to be recorded by the people leader and in terms of if it's goal setting and going in there for your reviews as mentioned.**"-(C003, p 15)

"**Our Performance Management process is technology-driven to a certain extent, for example if you look at the entire Performance Management process, it starts with goal setting, goal contracting, employee self-assessment, peer assessments, line manager review, performance ratings and feedback, so with us certain parts of the process are technology -driven but not the entire process.**"-(T001, p 15)

"**We also use SAP SuccessFactors. We've been using that for quite a while now for performance management goal setting and the performance ratings, we also do have a manual intervention in terms of final reviews with actual rating and then review. And then there's also continuous performance where they have the feedback and that's also then managed on SuccessFactors as well.**"- (T002, p 17)

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> ***"****OK, for managing performance the process is partly technology-driven with Success Factors which manages the goal setting, performance ratings are captured there however the final rating and feedback is done manually.****"-(T003, p 14)***

In conclusion, there is an indication of a technology-driven approach, however this will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

- **Succession Planning**

Here are some key aspects of the succession planning landscape based on the responses for the big four Telcos in South Africa:

> ***"****And so this is a process in place which is linked to the talent review process. We have what we call our top talent employees and those are identified successors who form part of our Succession slate with an indication of their succession readiness and destination role .But this is however done manually where all people leaders for a specific business unit basically sit together and discuss the talent or successes or high potential employees for that specific business unit at this stage. This manual process is called Talent forums which is a desktop exercise with the use of Excel and PowerPoint currently with no technology intervention at all.****"- (V001, p 24)***

> ***"****For this process, there isn't really any technology driven tools that we use to identify successors for critical roles. The process is still a bit manual as we sit in Talent forums with spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations with the names of the identified talent, captured with an indication of their succession readiness with a destination role or roles identified. This is quite a manual process and all people leaders for a specific business unit sit together to discuss talent, discuss successors and as well as high potential employees for that specific business unit.****"- (V002, p 15)***

> ***"****Yeah, that this is a process where I see the gap in terms of using technology in the organisation, for example when in Talent Acquisition we want to fill a role with an internal employee based on succession slates per Business Unit, it's not recorded on any system that we can easily access but you have to ask the HRBP for that specific BU to provide you with the data that comes in Excel and PowerPoint****"- (V003,p 17)***

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"Because we use Oracle platform, everyone is supposed to build their profile and create an account. So, we can identify and see what capabilities the individual has? Where are the developmental gaps? The capabilities that we want to build for them and to look for programmes for It will link to learning, link to everything and compile programmes that are relevant to you as an individual, and these development interventions are aimed at fast-tracking our identified successor's readiness for the next role." ***-(M001, p 15)***

"So, what I'm currently doing is I'm working with the HCM team as well because we are building this succession model right for HCM. So the capability is there, obviously we have to tailor, make it to suit the needs that we would want in the organisation and obviously to speak to what it is that we're trying to achieve through succession management." ***- (M002, p 19))***

"Uh, when it comes to our organization and that part, I think it's still lacking. So, this is based again on it's not, 100% system driven where you can say I've identified talent from, what I mean is from end-to-end process that is still lacking. I t is still a manual process where you still need to go and have conversations with the executives in Talent forums who are the people that you think are the successors and there's nothing that you can say. This information is manually locked on the system where the executives can just identify the successors. In so doing, they're able to say why this person is identified as a successor, what kind of development is required, then it becomes a conversation" ***-(M003, p 17)***

"Currently the process again is very manual, for example all line managers from each Business Unit will sit in Talent forums to discuss their Top talent, identify HiPo'S and successors with even destination roles, all of this is done manually on Excel and PowerPoint. These discussions, tend to be subjective at times with a lot of biases." ***-(C001, p 12)***

"So, with an integrated system, that works extremely well because. You will have a view of employees that were identified as top talent. And you know, however with a talent management framework works, with that you will get an understanding of where they are in terms of their development gaps and what training is earmarked for remark training, they've completed. However, currently Succession planning is still a manual exercise that is not system-driven," ***-(C002, p 14)***

"You know this process is very manual as a result you don't know if it's accurate or not, but if we had an integrated system, you would know who your top talent

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*is, as well as identified successors, their succession readiness and destination role.**" -(C003, p 15)***

"**In terms of our Succession planning, this is a very manual process as this is done through Talent discussions by people leaders per Business Unit and that gets translated into an Excel spreadsheet that is kept by the HRBP to give an overview of identified Talent and Successors in the specific Business Unit.**" -(T001, p 14)

"**It definitely does help from firstly from a tracking and reporting perspective that at least we have a central repository the hindrance though or the downside that maybe we're not fully utilizing yet is more the searching across the business for that and the talent pools.**" -(T002, p 16)

"**Based on the ratings that are captured on the system, line managers and HRBP's can see who talent there's is however also a bit of manual intervention as talent ratings are discussed in talent forums with a full view of who has been identified as top talent or HiPos. The actual succession list is recorded manually on Excel and spreadsheet and PowerPoint.**"-(T003, p 14)

In conclusion, Succession Management is a key practice aimed at retaining talent within the Telcos and some if the findings will be discussed in the next Chapter.

- **Engagement and Retention**

Let us examine some of the employee engagement initiatives in the South African Telecommunications Industry and integration of technology into these initiatives.

"**So as mentioned this is a big focus for us as part of our listening strategy that employees engage and employee engagement that we use digital and engagement surveys that allows the organization to give feedback from employees as to how they are engaged by their leaders as well as how they leaders or their leaders lead their teams in alignment to our leadership standards. And these are set by the organization itself, so some digital tools use it for feedback. I do believe that they store more that we can do in terms of our enhancement and our processes, yeah**."- (V001, p 28)

***"**OK, so we do have maybe quite a few others. So as part of our listening strategy and employee engagement, we use digital engagement surveys and that allows the organisation to get feedback from the employees and how they are engaged*

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*by their leaders, as well as how leaders lead their teams in alignment to the leadership standards set out by the organisation. One of the digital tools used for feedback is, as I've mentioned before, the 360-feedback tool, and we also make use of a platform called Vodafone Stars. Through these two platforms, line managers and peers are able to provide feedback and recognition, and this allows the employee to then receive this feedback in real time rather than having to wait or receive this feedback during a performance review session. The Vodafone Stars platform also allows the manager to give monetary recognition for an employee's exceptional performance at any point in time.**"-."- (V002, p 15)***

"**I mean, you know in this aspect, there's a lot that we're doing as an organisation to keep our employees engaged for example, we do our Pulse and Spirit beat surveys through digital platforms and as part of our listening strategy. We also do CEO Townhall sessions where all employees across our footprint can join these important conversations though technology-driven platforms.**"-(V003,p 24)

"**We launched something called Move. It was supposed to be, you know, like employee engagement platform where employees can load their stories, they can show us what they are cooking and share recipes or. anything you can do, anything you could load, anything you could do anything, and you could engage with all our executives. You could, you know, executives could engage with people however this is no longer active.**"-(M001, p 19)

"**So, look, here I will say that there is a room for improvement, although we have certain technologies that are currently in place that bring about the engagement and keeps people motivated. So, we have a platform that is called SHINE right, and SHINE is where we recognise our people in real time, as and when it happens. We call it a kudos system, right? So, if I've worked with you, I can go on there and I can go and send a kudos which has monetary value because you can use the points to sort of get other things.**"-(M002, p 22)

*"We do conduct surveys to get to understand where people are at and this system driven, for example upon receiving the outcomes of the survey, I must go and present in different departments it's not as it's stress to say. Now I need to slice and dice the report. You know everything. It comes from the system. It's done by Willis and Towers, right? It's not as if it's our system, but everything is there. It's easily accessible. I'm able to see in terms of gender. Are people happy in terms of race and you know who are responding in a certain way?**"-(M003, p 19)***

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"*Currently to keep our employees engaged, we use surveys to keep our staff engaged and get to understand the pulse of the organisation. CEO townhall sessions also for part of our listening strategy. However, there's no technology - driven initiatives that form part of our engagement and retention strategy.****"-(C001, p 17)***

*"Yeah, for us it will take a while before we can really, really get that level, especially with regards to employee engagement. If we had a system that works for employees, you know it, and sometimes I say that it's about getting your basics right. You know, because if your basics are not right, even if you get something fancy, it usually doesn't work if not utilised properly. Start having a system that employees can look into their information. At this point we have no system that really works to capture employee data that they would capture to share their views and opinions****" –(C002, p 15)***

"*At this stage, currently there's technology-driven platform to integrate as even our CEO sessions are physically on campus, but when we have the system and that's going to start hopefully giving us that it will allow us to capture everything and so currently these there's not a linkage onto the system and we're not able to get that type of information.****"-(C003, p 14)***

"*We used to have our own internal social media page called workplace that works like Facebook but unfortunately it no longer exists now. So, this is an area where we are falling short as we have no other means of engagements that are technology- driven except for making use of CEO Townhall sessions to engage employees where some employees will physically attend however in order to reach out to all employees, we use technology to link all employees across the country to connect with the CEO and interact Live throughout the session.****"-(T001, p 17)***

"*Umm yes, I think we can do more there. But we do have a lot of just from general communication, general engagements with a lot of our internal processes, so everything is then online.****"-(T002, p 14)***

"*So, we have exit interviews that we do like I said, part of our recruitment system does allow for certain and activities to take place on. And part of this we do basically capture the reasons as to and have interviews as to sit down and trying to clarify what the actual reason is.****"-(T003, p 17)***

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In conclusion, the Telcos have established innovative ways to engage interactively with their employees; to fast-track technological changes to improve interactive engagements. However the findings on this practice will be discussed in the next section of the study.

4.3.3 To investigate how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance Talent Management practices in the South African Telecommunications industry

- ***Data-driven Insights***

Below is an indication of how talent management practitioners in the telecommunications industry have used data-driven insights to influence their talent management processes.

> ***"****Yeah, we've recently embarked on a skills assessment journey for all employees using IM. I'm not sure if you're familiar and the goodness skills assessment tool, so we've used that data from the outcomes of this assessment to make decisions on a what and who we should invest in as part of our leadership development strategy****." -(V001, p 30)***

> ***"****OK. Last year, we started our skills assessment journey for all employees using Gartner Skills Assessment. We used the data from the outcomes of that assessment to decide on what and who should we invest on as part of our leadership development strategy. You know, so this resulted in identifying where the critical skills required to build future ready leadership pipelines also and as well as how we're going to use that to retain the talent in and our organization post COVID.****"- (V002, p 20)***

> ***"****Data driven insights; I mean obviously I look at our reporting on a weekly basis around a number of vacancies that we have number of vacancies followed by each individual talent acquisition partner. Those data driven insight skin tell me you know how busy various departments are. It also talks to me about how we not retaining individuals within certain business units.****"- (V003, p 28)***

> ***"****Our decisions are driven by data insights All the time. We do that so we, I mean you you're in HR. We can't do anything without data driven, backed by data.****" - (M001, p 27)***

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"So, I must say as much as it is still very manual. We use a lot of data to do certain assessments, right? So, for us it is imperative, especially when we were working on our critical skills. It's really to understand what is in the external market, what is deemed critical right, looking at future skills, taking that data and taking the data that we have internally. So, as I mentioned earlier, right, so in the first year of having HCM, we went on a very big drive to sort of umm get people to create that CV for themselves and their skills and capabilities on HCM." ***- (M002, p26)***

*"You know Big Data is really utilized to make decisions in our space everything that we do is based on insights that we get from data analytics and that then influences our was of work" -((****M003, p 27)***

"Yes, in Talent Management all processes are data-driven we always gain insights from analysing data, and this helps us in understanding what employees really want for example in Talent development" ***-(C001, p 21)***

*"Line managers capture data on performance ratings in a system using technology and when that data is analysed, we are able to see our Talent landscape from a gender perspective thus enabling us to invest more on female talent in order to fact-track them for the next role." – (****C002, p 19)***

"OK an example of that is where we've noticed in the last couple months, that we are losing talent specifically female talent. So, we took the data from our exit interviews to get to understand why people are leaving." ***-(C003, p 24)***

"On this one, I will respond based on my role or in my work environment, which is Learning and Development, we recently started a Project that was aimed at building Capabilities and accelerating female talent in the technical environment. We used data to take a very cautious decision on accelerating female talent through development interventions targeted at them." ***-(T001, p 19)***

"I can only think of the one I was with performance where we definitely identified a potential bias or just the way the ratings were coming out in a specific business area and we could then go into that and explored further and almost do a bit of an investigation, but more education around how we do performance management properly, how do we do the rating. So, there was that through the data, which is really handy because we did a thorough data review, you know, around the whole across the whole business. So, there was nice to identify an area where things it, it was just questionable." ***-(T002, p 21)***

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"**One that I can think of on top of my mind is the campaign that we recently implemented on talent reviews where we were running a campaign for talent reviews across the organization. Basically, data showed us that female talent is really struggling to navigate the organisation into senor leadership roles**" -(T003, p 22)

Data analytics influences the approach that talent practitioners take on talent management. The findings from the respondents will be further discussed in the next section of the study.

- **Challenges in Technology Integration in Talent Management**

As with any introduction of a new way of work, technology integration can pose challenges. Below is a presentation of the challenges experienced in the telecommunications industry in South Africa.

*"Umm, like top of my mind obviously, uncertainty around job security, when it comes to technology and skills, talent management practitioners are not skilled to utilize technology in their processes and there has been a lot of sceptical feedback" **-(V001, p 31)***

"**Oh, I'd definitely say the first thing that comes to mind is technology skills, where technology is concerned, our talent management practitioners were not really skilled to utilize technology in their processes because this was not a norm before.so, there's also a bit of gap. A lot of scepticism where talent management practitioners think that their jobs are now at risk because of technology**" -(V002, p 21)

"**I think the challenge is always uptake and adoption. Like I said before, low uptake from employees that are using the technology. It's always the biggest challenge.**"- (V003, p 30)

"**I will say for us particularly right and obviously I think what we would deem as negative is that there's a lot of administration if I must put that goes into because you need to get the Hire view questions from the line manager.**" -(M001, p 27)

***"**One biggest issue that we have is legacy issues and it's because people are especially the older generation, right, are very hesitant when it comes to technology and trying new things. But our biggest challenge has always been to get them and on board and they buy in our legacy employees and with regards*

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*to technology, the second is and I think its worldwide, right is the apprehension against technology taking my job.**"- (M002, p 25)***

*For example, people will be complaining that it is a tedious process even on the system they are saying it takes too much of their time as they need to click here, I need to click there. It's not user friendly, so those are the obstacles that you will experience where the system is not. doing the work that it's supposed to be doing with too many technical glitches" **-(M003, p 24)***

"**The major challenge in our organisation in general is the adoption of technology and integration into our practices and processes.**" -(C001, p 21)

"**Yeah, more than anything is when you design a system without making sure that the leads are socialised and are buying into it. Then they definitely will not use it. So, if the key stakeholders are not using the technology because they are more comfortable with the tried and tested traditional ways of doing things, it is such a waste of money.**"-"- (C002, p 23)

"**Uncertainty around job security as implementing technology-driven processes results in less human intervention. Talent management practitioners fear that they might lose their jobs. As a result, they became more sceptical in utilising technology.**" -(C003, p 22)

"**Uncertainty around job security, as implementing technology-driven processes results in less human intervention and talent management practitioners fear that they might lose their jobs.**"- (T001, p 22)

"**Willingness or openness to technology. People, like I said earlier, like their Excel and their PowerPoints and things like that.**" -(T002, p 21)

"**I would say adoption as I've indicated that some of our processes are still very manual and not because there's no system in place. But people are just sceptical of using technology and that causes slow adoption.**" -(T003, p 23)

In conclusion, like any other new process, technology integration has many challenges, however these will be further discussed in the next section of the study.

- **Future Technology Integration in Talent Management**

Key elements of future technology integration in talent management practices in South African Telcos are presented below***:***

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"It's so real from my perspective. And like I said, from my perspective, within many organisations as a whole shifting into a digital realm, particularly telecoms companies and transitioning from traditional roles to technology driven entities, there is the existence of immense potential to harness available technology for advanced intelligent management practices. However, it is crucial for organisations to recognise the necessity of upskilling and reskilling that we sometimes overlook within the talent management practitioners to align with technology involvement advancements." ***-(V001, p 31)***

"*I think as most organisations are transitioning to a digital era, specifically the telecoms companies that are transitioning from traditional telcos to technology organisations such as ours, there is a lot of potential to leverage technology to remove manual processes, in order to enhance our talent management practices.*
But I think also organisations need to also understand that this will require a lot of upskilling and reskilling for talent management practitioners to keep up with the technology and the use of technology in their processes.." ***- (V002, p 21)***

"Definitely a way to go, however integration of technology needs to be fully focused. So, we have too many organisations, not just for the COM who have various systems in play that deal with one component of the life cycle of talent management. So, like I said previously Taylor did TA, but we did TM manually. That integrated both, right. It also integrated performance. Did it integrate learning? Not entirely. So, that is part of the value chain of technology - having the right technology in the background, but that encompasses and consolidates your entire process." ***- (V003, p 32)***

"*The system is, if the technology is able to give you predictions and to give you things that you can play around with, especially with the intelligence that we've got with the systems, so it can help us so much. It makes our life so much easier, and it can benefit the organisations that we work for"* ***-(M001, p 29)***

"*You know, taking away administrative activities, and integrating technology, I am all for that. And I understand that as we transition to this digital era, we have to make sure that we want to take our employees along on the journey with us, because like I said previously, if you don't show them that their job is not at stake, and you give them the insights that we are enabling them to actually do fruitful, work. Let the technology element take away the more mundane, repetitive things that we do day in and day out."* ***-(M002, p 31)***

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"I think that the important thing about improving the technology, is that it will help us to be the strategic partners instead of us having to focus more on data in transactions." ***-(M003, p 28)***

Telcos to be more technology companies, there is a need to integrate technology in ways of work. Talent Management is no exception at all, integration of technology into Talent Management practices will actually make things easier fir practitioners and it is what will set organisations apart as the war fir Talent is very rife and that requires organisations to differentiate themselves from an Employee Value Proposition perspective." ***- (C001, p 24)***

"It makes you do things better and actually funny that in managers or organizations that don't want to move with technology, they think that they can monitor what they are passionate about." ***- (C002, p 23)***

"If you look at the entire Talent Management cycle there's a lot of opportunities to integrate Technology into Talent Management practices from the Talent attraction, talent development and even how we onboard and offboard Talent into our organisation. This will make organisation to way ahead of the curve in terms of creating conducive environments where employees can thrive and feel they belong" ***-(C003, p 26)***

"As technology organisations, we need to leverage off the technology systems and platforms that are at our disposal and integrate them into our practices to enhance our ways of work. And most definitely, technology will enhance talent management practices like I said, as this will eliminate manual processes that are prone to errors that can pose a risk to business, whilst improving ways of work that increase employee retention." ***-(T001, p 22)***

"The more integrated you are with our talent management practices, same as with everything else, companies that have all of the billing systems integrated nicely give a nice smooth integrative experience for the customer, the same as our internal customers." ***-(T002, p 24)***

"For me, if you look at the entire talent management cycle, there are a lot of opportunities to integrate technology into talent management practices from the talent attraction, talent development and even how we onboard and offboard talent into our organisation. This will make organisation to way ahead of the curve in terms of creating conducive environments where employees can thrive and feel they belong. As technology organisations, we need to leverage of the

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> *technology systems and platforms that are at our disposal and integrate into our practices to enhance our ways of work.* ***-(T003, p 22)***

In conclusion, it is clear that all of the interviewed personnel across different business units from the different Telcos believe that technological advancements have a long way to go in terms of bringing about a total change in how technology can help to improve talent management. However, detailed findings will be discussed in the next section of the study.

Summary of the results/findings

In summary, talent management practitioners within the South African Telecommunications Industry responded to the questions through a semi-structured interview process in response to the questions, in a quest to address the objectives of the study, namely to explore emerging technologies from the talent management practice's perspective, to identify the talent management practices applicable, specifically in the South African Telecommunications Industry, and to investigate how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry.

A detailed discussion of the findings will be presented in the next section of the study.

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5 CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this section of the study, the researcher explores the insights derived from investigating how leveraging emerging technologies can enhance talent management practices in the telecommunications industry in South Africa. Through an exploration of the data collected and analysis conducted, this section aims to illustrate key trends, challenges, and opportunities for industry stakeholders .Throughout the discussion, the researcher examines the findings through various lenses, including the utilisation of technology in talent management practices, the impact of integrating emerging technologies into talent processes, and the challenges and opportunities associated with their adoption by picking up common themes that contribute to the findings. Moreover, the researcher will explore the implications of these findings for the future of work in the telecommunications industry of South Africa.

The researcher will then critically evaluate the findings within the context of existing literature and industry insights. This discussion aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the potential of emerging technologies to revolutionise Talent Management practices and drive organisational success in the South African telecommunications landscape.

5.2 Discussion of Findings per Research Objective

5.2.1 To explore emerging technologies from the Talent Management practice's perspective

Despite the technical advances showcased by talent management practitioners with regard to how technology is being leveraged off in their organisations, specifically in talent management, there is a clear indication that not all of the Telcos are on the same level when it comes to technology integration. Based on the responses, it is clear that not all talent management practices are technology- driven. For example, the succession planning process is still very manual, with the use of face-to face talent forums, Excel, and PowerPoint presentations, which makes the entire process

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subjective with room for errors and biases. This therefore suggests that telecommunications companies have a lot of technology at their disposal, however, it is not utilised to the fullest, specifically in talent management. There is a clear common theme that indicates a gap in the succession planning process that requires organisations to amplify their efforts in enhancing this practice, as an organisation's long-term profitability and sustainability are boosted by effective succession planning, which guarantees a smooth handoff of leadership and keeps a competent and qualified workforce. This is evidenced by the following response:

*"For this process, there aren't really any technology driven tools that we use to identify successors for critical roles. The process is still a bit manual as we sit in talent forums with spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations with the names of the identified talent, captured with an indication of their succession readiness with a destination role or roles identified. This is quite a manual process and all people leaders for a specific business unit sit together to discuss talent, discuss successors as well as high potential employees for that specific business unit."**--(V002, p 15)***

It can also be noted that the leading telecommunications companies in South Africa seem to have made some good progress in terms of integrating emerging technologies into their talent management. For example, the talent management practitioners outlined that their organisations have become very innovative by utilising technology in talent management, specifically in performance management, this can be evidenced by the below response:

So, the performance management process is automated for all employees and people leaders, as I said from the goal setting process to goal contracting with line managers, we have Mid- Year reviews. We have quarterly reviews. We do self-assessments, and our employees have an opportunity to self- assess themselves in terms of where they are with their performance and the goals they've set for themselves for the year. Peer reviews also in terms of colleagues rating each other or giving feedback to each other and also 360 feedback tool that we also use as well as then we round up the year with our final year in review and ratings and feedback. So, the system is set with timelines and reminders for all our employees to play their part in the process and also be active participants in their performance management and not just so leave it to line manager." ***(V002, p 4)***

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The general theme that can be picked up from the responses regarding the utilisation of emerging technologies in talent management practices within the telecommunications industry is that there are insights of technological implementation from all respondents in their respective Telco. In addition, the practitioners revealed that every Telco has its own unique technology-driven platforms and tools that are implemented in their individual Telcos to execute talent management practices. The other theme that can be identified is that some Telcos utilised old fashioned systems of executing talent management practices, and that their practitioners call for improved deployment of new technologies in their organisations. Most of the practitioners indicated how they have made a turnaround by integrating technology and how they succeeded in talent management through the integration of technology, specifically in performance management, talent development and talent acquisition. It has become evident that there is a clear understanding of the transition from traditional Telco to become tech organisations which therefore means that there is a need not to be left behind in terms of streamlining talent management practices to keep abreast of Digital transformation in a Digital era.

The literature review (Saadatmand, Safaie, & Dastjerdi, 2022) clearly states that through the integration of technological innovations with talent management, a company will have a competitive edge over other competing companies. The author/s further dismissed the notion of “different strokes for different folks” for the current digital world, which emphasises that companies need to up their technological game for them to stay relevant and move on with the current technical innovations. The literature review also affirms that companies must use resources such as technological innovations to have talented employees that will ensure a sustained competitive edge over other competing companies (Saadatmand, Safaie, & Dastjerdi, 2022).

It can also be noted that the **innovation diffusion theory** is applied, as one of its elements is **understanding the innovation.** Thus, this study begins by identifying the emerging technologies relevant to talent management in the South African Telecommunications Industry. This includes AI-driven recruitment tools, virtual reality

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for training, performance analytics software, and digital platforms for career and talent development.

5.2.2 To identify the Talent Management practices applicable specifically in the Telecommunications industry

Talent management is a function within human resources management where organisations optimise the entire talent lifecycle, including hiring, employee engagement, retention, skills development, succession planning and other key activities related to talent. These practices form part of an effective talent management strategy that requires people resources with clearly defined roles and responsibilities within talent management to execute the strategy. The people in these various roles are talent practitioners as they are fully responsible for talent management practices. The telecommunications industry is no exception to this need for resources, therefore below are the specific roles identified in the four big telecommunications giants in South Africa, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities in talent management.

"So, as mentioned, I am in the Talent Management space. Specifically, My role is to basically manage and monitor the entire Talent and Performance management process within our organization. So, this includes educating, facilitating and sort of almost creating awareness on how we manage and reward performance within the organisation in a nutshell." ***- (V002, p 2)***

From the responses, it is evident that the respondents are responsible for the full talent management cycle, as you can pick up that based on their roles there is an integration of more than one or two talent management practices in their roles within their organisations. However, not all of the roles are fully responsible for the entire talent management cycle. For example, the OD consultant plays a support role and mostly looks after performance management as a talent management practice:

"OK, my role is to ensure that in terms of the organizational designs from the structures, restructuring, posting of the roles, that's what I basically do as well as

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*setting up frameworks as a standard to monitor how Performance is managed in the organisation.**" -(M003, p 4)***

According to Rukunga and Nzulwa (2018), organisations are faced with a challenge of losing talent. The telecommunications industry is characterised by stiff competition for talent and innovation (Erdogan & Kunday, 2022). For an organisation to prosper under stiff competition requires a suitable talent management strategy. Erdogan and Kunday (2022) point out that talent management practices involve attract, develop, performance manage, reward and retain talent. The authors further indicate that practising the five key elements of talent management, viz talent attraction, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, career management and reward and recognition need to be integrated with innovation in order to put their organisation at a point of advantage.

The common theme that can be picked up from the responses is that across all of the different Telcos, learning and development is successfully driven by technology, as all Telcos use a Learning Management System (LMS) which is linked and integrated to other external platforms like LinkedIn Learning, which shows good technological integration applicable to talent management practices in South Africa. This therefore indicates that as most Telcos are transitioning from traditional Telecoms to technology companies, skills transformation is key and takes priority for the critical future capabilities required by their organisations.

There is also a clear theme that indicates that across all Telcos there are practitioners that specialise in specific talent management practices and are experts in the field.

A **resource-based view (RBV) theory** is applied as the study explores how emerging specific areas of talent management, such as recruitment, training, performance management, and career development, where these technologies can make a significant impact technology can be integrated into existing talent management practices within the South African Telecommunications Industry. This would involve identifying

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5.2.3 To investigate how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance Talent Management practices in the South African Telecommunications industry

In response to this research objective, there is a clear indication that talent management practitioners in the telecommunications industry are eager and ready to integrate technology in their talent management practices, as most of them believe that this will help to remove some of the biases in their processes. This can be evidenced by the below responses:

"*I think as most organisations are transitioning to a digital era, specifically the telecoms companies that are transitioning from traditional telcos to technology organisations such as ours, there is a lot of potential to leverage technology to remove manual processes, in order to enhance our talent management practices. But I think also organisations need to also understand that this will require a lot of upskilling and reskilling for talent management practitioners to keep up with the technology and the use of technology in their processes..****"- (V002, p 21)***

"*As technology organisations, we need to leverage off the technology systems and platforms that are at our disposal and integrate them into our practices to enhance our ways of work. And most definitely, technology will enhance talent management practices like I said, as this will eliminate manual processes that are prone to errors that can pose a risk to business, whilst improving ways of work that increase employee retention.****" -(T001, p 22)***

There is a strong belief that there is still a lot of technological improvement that needs to take place in order to achieve smooth integration of technical advancements in talent management, and that there is a lot of potential that has not been tapped into. As such there is a huge gap between integrating technical innovations with talent management, and that the ordinary employees are lagging behind in terms of possessing technical skills that would complement technological advancements. This is indicated by the below response:

"*Oh, I'd definitely say the first thing that comes to mind is technology skills, where technology is concerned, our talent management practitioners were not really skilled*

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to utilize technology in their processes because this was not a norm before.so, there's also a bit of gap. A lot of scepticism where talent management practitioners think that their jobs are now at risk because of technology" ***-(V002, p 21)***

Most of them also believe that it will also make things easier for them. It has become evident that there is a clear understanding of the transition from traditional Telco to become tech organisations, which therefore means that there is a need not to be left behind in terms of streamlining talent management practices to keep abreast of digital transformation in a digital era. Below is what respondents had to say:

"*For me, if you look at the entire talent management cycle, there are a lot of opportunities to integrate technology into talent management practices from the talent attraction, talent development and even how we onboard and offboard talent into our organisation. This will make organisation to way ahead of the curve in terms of creating conducive environments where employees can thrive and feel they belong. As technology organisations, we need to leverage of the technology systems and platforms that are at our disposal and integrate into our practices to enhance our ways of work.* ***-(T003, p 22)***

*Telcos to be more technology companies, there is a need to integrate technology in ways of work. Talent Management is no exception at all, integration of technology into Talent Management practices will actually make things easier fir practitioners and it is what will set organisations apart as the war fir Talent is very rife and that requires organisations to differentiate themselves from an Employee Value Proposition perspective.****"- (C001, p 24)***

Based on the responses, there are common themes that have been identified. For example, there is a very strong sentiment that technological advances have been relatively implemented across South African Telcos to enhance talent management practices and that these Telcos have distinctive platforms and systems in place to maintain their talent management practices. However, there are still a lot of opportunities as Telcos have a lot of technology at their disposal that can be leveraged off to enhance their talent management practices.

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The other theme that can be deduced from the study is that the practitioners believe that for digital transformation and technology integration to be successful, there has to be a change management process to socialise key stakeholders for a smooth transition and to eliminate skepticism. Below are some of the responses:

"*The biggest challenge we have is legacy issues and it's because people are especially the older generation, right, are very hesitant when it comes to technology and trying new things. But our biggest challenge has always been to get them and on board and they buy in our legacy employees and with regards to technology, the second is and I think its worldwide, right is the apprehension against technology taking my job.****"- (M002, p 25)***

"*I would say adoption as I've indicated that some of our processes are still very manual and not because there's no system in place. But people are just sceptical of using technology and that causes slow adoption.****" -(T003, p 23)***

This can be linked to the **technology acceptance model (TAM) theory** which helps to understand how employees in the South African Telecommunications Industry might perceive and adopt emerging technologies aimed at enhancing talent management practices. The TAM focuses on the factors influencing individuals' acceptance and usage of new technologies. The TAM has been applied to the research study through examining the Perceived Ease Of Use (PEOU) of emerging technologies. This involves assessing whether employees believe that these technologies are user-friendly and easy to integrate into their daily work routines vs the Actual Use(AU) which assesses the actual usage of emerging technologies for talent management practices. This involves examining whether employees are actively engaging with and utilising these technologies in their day-to-day work.

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5.3 Conclusion

The telecommunications sector in South Africa is characterised by rapid technological advancements, intense competition, and evolving workforce dynamics. Against this backdrop, organisations are increasingly recognising the pivotal role of talent management in maintaining competitiveness and driving innovation. By harnessing emerging technology, companies seek to optimise their talent acquisition, development and retention strategies, thereby gaining a strategic advantage in the dynamic marketplace.

All of the interviewed talent management personnel across different business units, of different telecommunication companies, believe that technological advancements have a long way to go in terms of bringing about a total change in how technology can help to improve talent management. The personnel acknowledged that technical advances have a lot of potential at stake, and that Telecoms must adopt and manipulate optimal merges with talent management, considering that the Telcos have a lot of technological innovation at their disposal.

"*It's so real from my perspective. And like I said, from my perspective, within many organisations as a whole shifting into a digital realm, particularly telecoms companies and transitioning from traditional roles to technology driven entities, there is the existence of immense potential to harness available technology for advanced intelligent management practices. However, it is crucial for organisations to recognise the necessity of upskilling and reskilling that we sometimes overlook within the talent management practitioners to align with technology involvement advancements****." -(V001, p 31)***

The potential for effective talent management in South African Telcos is dependent on what every Telco role-player can unleash in their deployment of this technology awaiting to be tapped into. The findings showed that talent management in South African Telcos practises are headed in the right direction but lack a few aspects in order to be fully accomplished. This study showed that the talent management of

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Telcos in South Africa have substantially developed and deployed technical innovations for the smooth functioning of their talent management, and yet, a lot of technical advancements are yet to be used in terms of fine tuning the existing talent management.

This can be indicated in the below conceptual framework that indicates **the integration-adoption-effectiveness model**

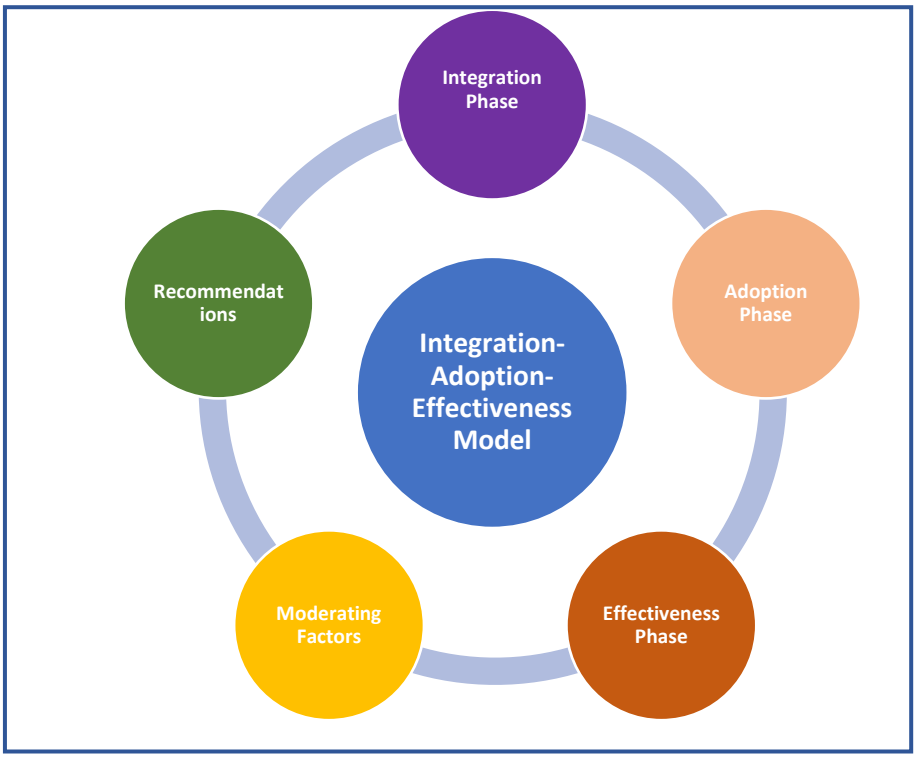

Figure 2– The integration-adoption-effectiveness model - source (own)

The figure above is the integration-adoption-effectiveness model which is a conceptual framework used to provide a summary of the discussion of the findings for the study on leveraging emerging technologies to enhance talent management practices in the telecommunications industry in South Africa.

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The Model has five phases as follows:

- **The Integration Phase:** This involves the identification of emerging technologies relevant to talent management practices and assessing the readiness of organisations to integrate these technologies.
- **The Adoption Phase:** This focuses on the adoption of emerging technologies by organisations for talent management purposes. It encompasses the technology acceptance model (TAM), which examines employees' perceptions of the usefulness and ease of use of these technologies, as well as adoption patterns based on the innovation diffusion theory.
- **The Effectiveness Phase:** This evaluates the impact of technology adoption on talent management practices and organisational performance outcomes. It assesses how the integration of emerging technologies enhances talent management practices like recruitment, training, performance management, career development, and overall organisational effectiveness.
- **Moderating Phase:** This assesses how moderating factors, such as organisational culture, leadership, and regulatory environment, influence the success of technology adoption and its effectiveness in enhancing talent management practices. These factors can either facilitate or hinder the integration and adoption of emerging technologies within organisations.
- **Recommendations:** This is upon completion of all of the above phases; recommendations will be provided for organisations to improve their talent management practices through the strategic adoption of emerging technologies.

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6 CHAPTER SIX - SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this section of the study, I'll be presenting my conclusions and recommendations based on the findings from the data analysis that the researcher conducted in addressing the objectives of the study which are:

- To explore emerging technologies from the talent management practices' perspective.
- To identify the talent management practices applicable, specifically in the South African Telecommunications Industry
- To investigate how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry.

The researcher will then make conclusions and offer actionable recommendations for industry leaders, and HR professionals in general, to navigate the complexities of talent management in an era of technological disruption and digital transformation.

Finally, the researcher will make recommendations on parts of the study that require further investigation to expand the knowledge on how emerging technologies can be effectively leveraged to enhance talent management practices in the South African Telecommunications Industry, ultimately driving organisational performance, employee satisfaction, and industry innovation.

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6.2 Summary of Findings

6.2.1 To explore emerging technologies from the Talent Management practice's perspective

The findings of this research underscore the transformative potential of emerging technologies in revolutionising talent management within the South African Telecommunications Industry. The data collected from respondents indicates the integration of technology in some of their talent management practices. Based on the various roles that the respondents play in their respective organisations there is a clear indication of how emerging technologies are integrated throughout the various practices of the talent management cycle, for example, in recruitment and selection, learning and development, performance management and employee engagement and retention.

6.2.2 To identify the Talent Management practices applicable specifically in the Telecommunications industry

There are five talent management practices that can help to steer organisations through new ways of working and these are: Finding and hiring the right people, learning and growing, managing and rewarding performance, tailoring the employee experience, and optimising workforce planning and strategy. These practices form part of the talent management cycle. With the data collected, there is clear evidence that within talent management, the most popular and critical practices are talent acquisition, talent development, performance management, employee engagement and retention. This is based on the roles that formed part of the target population which is made up of talent practitioners for different processes within talent management.

6.2.3 To investigate how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance Talent Management practices in the South African Telecommunications industry.

Based on the data collected, the talent management practitioners strongly believe that the current integration of emerging technology into their talent management

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practices has enhanced their processes. There is a strong belief that there are still a lot of technological improvements that need to take place in order to achieve smooth integration of technical advancements in talent management, and that there is a lot of potential that has not been tapped into. As such there is a huge gap between integrating technical innovations with talent management. In particular, the ordinary employees are lagging behind in terms of possessing technical talents that would complement technological advancements.

6.3 Conclusions on Findings

6.3.1 To explore emerging technologies from the Talent Management practice's perspective

In conclusion, the telecommunications industry has already started integrating emerging technologies like AI, Big Data, Virtual and Augmented Reality in some of their talent management practices. However, there is still room for improvement. Moreover, through strategic adoption and integration of these technologies, organisations can not only address current talent challenges, but also proactively prepare for future workforce demands, ensuring sustained growth and success in the ever-evolving industry landscape.

By harnessing emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning and data analytics, companies seek to optimise their talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies, thereby gaining a strategic advantage in the dynamic marketplace. Saadatmand, Safaie and Dastjerdi (2022) clearly state that through the integration of technological innovations with talent management, a company will have a competitive edge over other competing companies. They further argue that for the current digital world, companies need to up their technological game for them to stay relevant and move on with the current technical innovations. Before March 2020 the industry was solid and occupied a significant market, however, during Covid-19, this industry was forced to shrink due to challenges posed by the pandemic. This shrinkage is in terms of the organisational profits, market and human resources. This is despite the industry full of all kinds of technologies; viz.

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Artificial intelligence (AI), Robotic Process Automation (RPA) Big Data etc. (Saadatmand, Safaie, & Dastjerdi, 2022).

According to De Lestrange (2019), emerging technologies like Artificial intelligence (AI) and gamification approaches have also helped to evolve talent management platforms into high performing systems which are key to attracting, retaining, developing and rewarding people.

6.3.2 To identify the Talent Management practices applicable specifically in the Telecommunications industry

In conclusion, talent management is a function within human resource management where organizations optimise the entire talent management lifecycle, including hiring, employee engagement, retention, skills development, succession planning and other key activities related to talent. These practices form part of an effective talent management strategy that requires people resources with clearly defined roles and responsibilities within talent management to execute the strategy. The people in these various roles are talent practitioners. The telecommunications industry is no exception to this need for resources: for an organisation to prosper under stiff competition, it requires a suitable talent management Strategy with relevant resources.

6.3.3 To investigate how emerging technologies can be leveraged to enhance Talent Management practices in the South African Telecommunications industry.

In conclusion, talent management practitioners in the telecommunications industry are eager and ready to integrate technology in their talent management practices, as most of them believe that this will help to remove some of the biases in their processes. Most of them also believe that it will also make things easier for them. It has become evident that there is a clear understanding of the transition from traditional Telco to become tech organisations which therefore means that there is a need not to be left behind in terms of streamlining talent management practices to keep abreast of digital transformation in a digital era. The literature review states that

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companies that use innovative talent management practices are more likely to avoid extinction in times of economic hardships or disturbances. Companies who lag behind in administering new technologies are often viewed as dull and irrelevant by consumers, which can cause a company to suffer a gradual death.

There is a strong belief that there are still a lot of technological improvements that need to take place in order to achieve smooth integration of technical advancements in talent management, where there is a lot of potential that has not been tapped into. As such there is a huge gap between integrating technical innovations with talent management, in particular where the ordinary employees are lagging behind in terms of possessing technical talents that would complement technological advancements.

6.4 Recommendations

In general, there is no doubt that Talent management practices are undergoing a significant transformation driven and influenced by advancements in technology. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, data analytics, and automation offer new opportunities to optimize talent acquisition, development, engagement, and retention processes throughout the Talent Management cycle. This session of the study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations to assist organizations in effectively integrating emerging technologies into their talent management strategies.

These recommendations are aimed at assisting Talent Management practitioners on how they can leverage and integrate emerging technologies into their day-to day Talent Management practices, and they are:

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Talent Management Practice	Recommendations
Talent Acquisition	• Efficient utilisation of AI-powered recruitment platforms: Leveraging AI algorithms for resume screening, candidate matching, and predictive analytics can streamline the hiring process, improve candidate quality, and reduce bias in selection Implement chatbots for candidate engagement: Deploying chatbots for initial candidate interactions, FAQs, and scheduling interviews enhances candidate experience and frees up HR resources for more strategic tasks.
Talent Development	• Personalized learning platforms: AI-driven learning management systems can analyse employee skills, preferences, and performance data to deliver personalized training content and recommendations, fostering continuous hyper personalised learning and skills development. • Virtual reality (VR) simulations: VR technology offers immersive training experiences for employees, particularly useful for technical skills training, leadership development, and soft skills enhancement.
Employee Engagement	• AI-powered sentiment analysis: Analysing employee feedback from various sources using AI-driven sentiment analysis tools enables HR to identify trends, gauge employee sentiment, and proactively address concerns to enhance employee engagement and satisfaction. • Gamification for employee engagement: Incorporating gamification elements into performance management, learning programs, and recognition systems can increase employee motivation, participation, and productivity.
Talent Retention	• Predictive analytics for attrition prediction: Employing predictive analytics models on employee data can identify flight risks, enabling proactive retention strategies such as personalized career development plans, mentoring programs, and targeted incentives • AI-driven employee feedback platforms: AI-powered feedback platforms facilitate continuous feedback loops, real-time recognition, and sentiment analysis, fostering a culture of transparency, trust, and engagement within the organization

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6.5 Recommendations for further studies

Future research studies on leveraging emerging technologies to enhance Talent Management practices in the South African telecommunications industry could explore several avenues to further expand the understanding and implementation of technology-driven talent management strategies. Here are some recommendations:

1. **Cultural Adaptation and Organizational Context**: Investigate how cultural factors and organizational contexts influence the adoption and effectiveness of emerging technologies in talent management within the South African telecommunications sector. Explore how cultural norms, values, and organizational structures shape the implementation and acceptance of technology-driven HR practices and identify strategies for effectively navigating cultural barriers.

   Establish how the dimension of each of the identified cultures and organizational contexts shape the adoption and effectiveness of emergent technologies within talent management within the South African Telecommunications Industry. Understand those particular cultural attributes and organizational structures which impact technology enabled practices of HR and hence recommend ways by which these can be mitigated

2. **Ethical Considerations and Fairness**: Examine the ethical implications of using AI and data-driven algorithms in talent management processes within the South African context. Investigate potential biases, privacy concerns, and fairness issues associated with algorithmic decision-making in recruitment, performance evaluation, and employee development. Develop guidelines and best practices to ensure the ethical and responsible use of technology in talent management.

   This domain measures the ethical considerations of using AI in data-driven algorithms and processes used in talent management adopted in a South African

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context. Investigate potential biases, privacy, and fairness issues presented by the usage of algorithmic decision-making within recruitment, performance evaluation, and employee development; further formulate standards and best practices that assure technologies are practiced ethically and responsibly in the question management of talents.

3. **Employee Perspectives and Adoption**: Explore employees' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding the use of emerging technologies in talent management practices within South African telecommunications companies. Conduct qualitative studies to understand employees' acceptance of AI-driven recruitment tools, personalized learning platforms, and performance analytics systems. Identify factors that facilitate or hinder technology adoption and develop strategies to promote employee engagement and participation.

   To understand employees' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences about the use of cutting-edge technologies in talent management practices by the South African telecommunication firms.

4. **Collaborative Partnerships and Ecosystem Dynamics**: Investigate the role of collaborative partnerships and ecosystem dynamics in leveraging emerging technologies for talent management in the South African telecommunications industry. Explore how telecom companies collaborate with technology vendors, educational institutions, government agencies, and other stakeholders to access talent, share best practices, and co-create innovative solutions. Analyse the impact of ecosystem partnerships on talent pipeline development, skill acquisition, and industry competitiveness.

5. **Digital Skills Development and Training Initiatives**: Assess the effectiveness of digital skills development and training initiatives facilitated by emerging technologies in the South African telecommunications sector. Evaluate the impact of AI-driven learning platforms, virtual reality simulations, and gamified training programs on employee skill acquisition, job performance, and career

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advancement. Identify barriers to digital skills development and propose strategies to address skill gaps and promote lifelong learning.

6. **Comparative Analysis and Benchmarking**: Conduct comparative studies to benchmark talent management practices and technology adoption trends in the South African telecommunications industry against global peers. Identify leading practices, emerging trends, and innovative approaches adopted by telecom companies in other regions. analyse the transferability of lessons learned and explore opportunities for cross-border collaboration and knowledge exchange.

7. **Impact Assessment of Technology Integration**: Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of integrating emerging technologies (such as AI, machine learning, and data analytics) on talent management outcomes in South African telecommunications companies. Evaluate key performance indicators (KPIs) related to talent acquisition, development, engagement, and retention over time to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of technology-driven initiatives.

8. **HR specifically Talent Management being a female dominated field of work:** Investigate how talent management is perceived as a female job. There is a strong perception that HR in general is a female-dominated environment. Most talent management practitioners are females throughout the talent management cycle.

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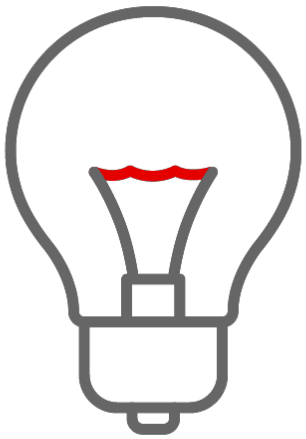
8 Appendices

Appendix A

INTERVIEW GUIDE



1. Interview Details

Overview of the Topic: Leveraging emerging Technologies in Talent Management practices in the Telecommunications industry.

Participant Code:

Date of interview:

C2 General

Introduction

- Introduce yourself and the purpose of the interview.
- Assure participants that their responses will be kept confidential.
- Background and Context: Provide background and context

Question 1:

Could you briefly describe your role within the organization and your involvement in Talent Management?

C2 General

Write Notes and Probe.

Question 2:

How familiar are you with the organization's utilization of technology in talent management? And

Write Notes and Probe.

Make sure that you structure your notes and probe the candidate's answers with further questions like the below:

Can you provide an overview of the technology platforms or tools that the organization currently employs for Talent Management?

Question 3: How have these technologies impacted the way talent management processes are carried out in your organisation?

C2 General

Write Notes and Probe.

Make sure that you probe the candidate's answers with further questions like the below:

Recruitment and Selection: How does technology play a role in the recruitment and selection processes? Could you give specific examples of how technology has changed or enhanced candidate sourcing, assessment, or interview processes?

Question 4:

In what ways has technology been utilized to facilitate employee development and learning initiatives?

Write Notes and Probe.

Make sure that you structure your notes and probe the candidate's answers with further questions like the below:

Can you share instances where technology has contributed to skill enhancement and professional growth among employees?

Question 5:

How does technology influence the performance management practices within the organization?

C2 General

Write Notes and Probe.

Make sure that you structure your notes and probe the candidate's answers with further questions like the below:

Are there any technology-driven tools or platforms used for setting goals, providing feedback, and measuring performance?

Question 6:

How does technology contribute to succession planning strategies and identifying high-potential employees?

Write Notes and Probe.

Make sure that you structure your notes and probe the candidate's answers with further questions like the below:

Are there specific technologies that aid in the assessment and development of future leaders?

Question 7:

How has technology been leveraged to engage and retain employees effectively?

C2 General

Write Notes and Probe.

Make sure that you structure your notes and probe the candidate's answers with further questions like the below:

Can you provide examples of digital tools or platforms that facilitate communication, recognition, or feedback?

Question 8:

Could you share a scenario where data-driven insights influenced a talent management strategy or decision?

Write Notes and Probe.

Make sure that you structure your notes and probe the candidate's answers with further questions like the below:

What challenges or obstacles have arisen due to the integration of technology in talent management?

Question 9:

From your perspective, how do you envision the future of technology integration in talent management practices within the organization?

C2 General

Write Notes and Probe.

Make sure that you structure your notes and probe the candidate's answers with further questions like the below:

Closing:

Is there anything else you would like to share about the organization's experiences and lessons learned from leveraging technology in talent management?

- **Additional Questions / Comments:**
- **Appreciation and Follow-up:**
- **Thank the participant for their time and insights.**

C2 General

Signed Memorandum of Corrections

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C2 General