

The Successful Match? Aligning Suppliers and Customers Key Success Factors in HR Platforms Management

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ABSTRACT: Within the Sharing Economy, a diverse range of services is emerging. Since Human Resource functions operate within this system, electronic human resource management (e-HRM) platforms must have dual-faceted key success factors, catering to both suppliers and customers.

This research explores this dual structure, encompassing both the customer side (SMEs) and the supplier side (HR suppliers). By examining the strategic and operational factors that shape this relationship, the study seeks to identify the key success factors from both viewpoints and provide critical managerial insights for optimizing e-HRM platform adoption and effectiveness.

A quantitative research approach was employed, gathering data from 87 SMEs and 82 HR suppliers through structured surveys. Statistical analyses, including mean comparisons, one-way Anova and correlation analysis, were conducted using SPSS to identify key success factors driving e-HRM adoption and its perceived value from both supplier and customer perspectives.

The study reveals that the key success factors for SMEs include Enhanced employee performance, Employee well-being, and Strategic advantages, while HR suppliers primarily emphasize Modernization and Strategic Advantages. These findings highlight the critical success factors of e-HRM platforms, particularly in relation to both the supplier and customer management side.

The study is limited by its sample size and its focus on the Italian market. The research provides strategic insights for HR technology providers, emphasizing the need to bridge the gap between SMEs and HR suppliers by developing more adaptive and scalable key success factors.

This study contributes to the existing literature by offering a dual perspective on e-HRM adoption, focusing on the alignment between HR suppliers and SMEs within the sharing economy.

KEYWORDS: e-HRM platforms; Quantitative study; Suppliers; SMEs; Sharing Economy; Human Resource Management

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, both scholars (Bondarouk et al., 2017; Thite, 2018; Wirtky et al., 2016) and consulting firms (Deloitte, 2021; Accenture, 2022) have shown increasing interest in electronic human resource management (e-HRM) platforms. E-HRM platforms act as intermediaries between small and medium-size enterprises (SME) (as customers) and HR consultants (as suppliers), offering digital solutions for recruitment, employee management, performance evaluation, and organizational development (Ruël et al., 2004; Alqarni et al., 2023). These platforms have gained prominence within the Sharing Economy (SE), where businesses seek cost-effective, flexible, and technology-driven HR solutions to manage an increasingly dynamic workforce (Bhatta and Thite, 2018; Cantoni and Mangia, 2018).

Despite the growing adoption of e-HRM platforms, a critical gap remains in understanding the key success factors in managing both suppliers and customers, particularly in determining which factors should be prioritized within e-HRM platforms. While theoretical and managerial discussions have predominantly focused on the technological

capabilities of these platforms, the alignment between supplier and customer key success factors remains underexplored.

To address these gaps, this study investigates the following research questions:

1. What are the most requested services and needs from both the customer and supplier perspectives?
2. Does the importance of these variables vary across different types of customers and suppliers?
3. What are the most interesting e-HRM key success factors in managing both suppliers and customers?

This paper focuses on the Italian market, where SMEs represent 99% of businesses and are increasingly turning to digital HR solutions to enhance competitiveness (ISTAT, 2022). A quantitative study was conducted using survey data from 87 SMEs and 82 HR suppliers. Statistical analyses, including mean comparisons, one-way Anova and correlation analysis, were performed to examine the key variables driving e-HRM adoption from both customer and supplier perspectives.

From a methodological perspective, this research provides empirical evidence supporting the strategic role of e-HRM platforms and their potential to enhance the ecosystem in which they operate. The findings offer valuable implications for HR technology providers seeking to tailor their platforms to better meet key success factors. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: the next section reviews the literature on e-HRM platforms, supplier-customer interactions, and the SE. The study's methodology and data collection process are then described, followed by an analysis and discussion of the results. The final section presents theoretical and managerial implications and directions for future research.

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

The operational framework of SE is structured around a platform or service enabler, functioning as a mediating entity that connects the suppliers, which are providers of underused goods or services, with customers (SMEs) who seek them (Kumar et al., 2018).

The intermediary role of the platform is pivotal in mediating the interactions between suppliers and customers. The suppliers, in this instance, are professionals who engage with the platform via temporary gig-work arrangements (Kerwin, 2022). Conversely, the customers are the entities that solicit these services, thereby creating a market for the platform's offerings (Bhatta and Thite, 2018). It is the platform that centrally coordinates the dynamics between these two groups (Kumar et al., 2018). This coordination suggests that sharing economy platforms, especially during their initial development stages, confront various internal and external adversities. Despite the model's origination as a response to customers preferences and usability, it often fails to meet the needs of the service supplier. This oversight leads to a situation where the suppliers must consider the negative impacts to ensure customer convenience and the economic benefits that accrue to the users of the platform. Such a compromise may lead to a compromised service quality due to the reduced engagement of the suppliers. Additionally, within SE, customers tend to seek the most advantageous deals, leading to a marked lack of loyalty towards any single brand. Delving into greater detail, as mentioned, the framework of SE can also be observed within e-HRM platforms. Given that organizations face a broad spectrum of responsibilities in managing their workforce (Ahammad, 2017), these responsibilities encompass defining job descriptions, delivering training programs, overseeing recruitment campaigns, streamlining onboarding processes, managing selection tasks, handling employee benefits, ensuring occupational health and safety, applying work-life balance policies, supervising employee performance, digitalizing personnel records, undertaking workforce evaluations, predicting staffing needs, promoting communication, improving employee retention approaches, cultivating worker dedication, overseeing remuneration structures, and advancing performance appraisal processes.

The integration of IT within e-HRM platforms enables them to perform a broad spectrum of functions (Wirtky et al., 2016). Given that the SE operates with a dual structure, comprising both the customer side and the supplier side, this study aims to identify the key success factors on both fronts.

Platform management

As established in the literature (Bissola and Imperatori, 2013; De Alwis et al., 2022; Ottolenghi, 2023), the primary objective of e-HRM platforms is to generate value across all stages of the HR value chain, benefiting both customers and suppliers. This is achieved through a networked ecosystem that facilitates interaction among diverse stakeholders, enabling collaboration despite their differing roles within the system. The essence of e-HRM platform services lies in their immediate creation and consumption, eliminating the feasibility of stockpiling HRM services as inventory.

Solayappan and AP (2019), along with Zhou et al. (2022), have conducted examinations of various attributes that may pertain to the platform aspect. The core service of these platforms is to advance the transition towards a paperless workflow. Moreover, one of the key features of e-HRM platforms is their ability to accelerate the retrieval and processing of data, thereby enhancing consistency and accuracy in both information management and report generation. These platforms are also designed to enable the prompt addressing of inquiries, while fostering a quality-centric work environment that contributes to a well-developed internal structure for HRM. They are intended to introduce greater clarity and openness within the HRM framework. E-HRM platforms are projected to serve as a centralized hub, amalgamating comprehensive support features, and are capable of delivering a dynamic workflow that supports the administration of business processes, as well as enhances productivity and employee contentment.

The platform transcends geographical boundaries and operational hours, enabling the decentralization of HR tasks and the normalization of fundamental HR practices and principles. It enhances operational efficiency through the integration of digitization and automation, and bolsters effectiveness by elevating the competency of leadership and enabling more agile employee management and decision-making (Alqarni et al., 2023). The platform also promotes promptness in responding to employee services while upholding a high internal standard for HR, contributing to an improved organizational work culture. By advocating for a decentralized approach to HR management, the platform ensures greater transparency, supports real-time oversight and management of HR, and serves as an intermediary for internal support functions, addressing any discrepancies between needs and provisions (Hossain, 2023). It ensures that strategic workflow is maintained, offering a robust, comprehensive, and instantaneous information system that ensures a methodical approach to business processes, productivity, and employee satisfaction. Particularly, it

addresses the financial aspect without sacrificing data quality by reducing data inaccuracies and by providing enhanced oversight and more effective tracking of HR activities (Maatman, 2006).

Customer management

Bhatta and Thite (2018) highlight the critical role of openness and active engagement from customers as essential for ensuring a platform's credibility and authenticity. Similarly, scholars such as Kovach et al. (2002) and Bondarouk et al. (2017) have acknowledged the potential of e-HRM platforms to enhance the quality of HRM services. The benefit to customers of e-HRM platforms emanates from the non-physical interactions that occur between the suppliers and the platform, a phenomenon explored by Schneider et al. (1996). It is during the testing phase that customers generally take on a more active role, guiding the process through to its fruition (Bhatta and Thite, 2018).

The uncompensated participation of customers in the creation process of HRM services introduces unique challenges for management. Such challenges might necessitate targeted orientation for line managers to adeptly integrate into the HR roles delineated within an e-HRM framework (Chung and Schneider, 2002). Within this framework, e-HRM emerges as a catalyst in promoting the fundamental characteristics of HRM services, which include their intangibility, the necessity for simultaneous production and consumption, and the imperative involvement of customer (Bondarouk et al., 2017). The perceived effectiveness of e-HRM platform services from the customer perspective is highly dependent on balancing supply and demand, while also ensuring the efficient management of service delivery times. These factors are instrumental in augmenting both the financial performance of organizations and the satisfaction levels of their customers (Rust et al., 1995; Schmenner, 1995; Fullerton, 2005; Bondarouk et al., 2017). It is essential to recognize customers not merely as the end-users but as active participants in the co-creation of HRM services, thereby fostering a synergistic partnership in service provision (Bowen and Greiner, 1986; Skaggs and Youndt, 2004; Meijerink and Bondarouk, 2013; Bondarouk et al., 2017). Further, Mishra (2009) highlights key elements that contribute to the successful engagement of customers with e-HRM platforms, including the importance of cooperative endeavors, dedication, agility in decision-making influence of organizational and societal culture, personal attributes, and availability of comprehensive training and learning opportunities. Several usage segments can be identified. Specifically, in relation to SMEs, which constitute the focus of this study, their adoption and utilization of e-HRM platforms warrant further investigation.

When SMEs engage as customers of e-HRM platforms, a distinct set of dynamics and considerations come into play, meriting scholarly attention within the management discipline (Thite, 2018). SMEs, characterized by their limited

scale and resources compared to larger corporations, face unique challenges and opportunities in adopting and integrating e-HRM systems into their operations. Firstly, the adoption of e-HRM platforms by SMEs signifies a strategic move towards digitalizing HR functions, aiming to enhance efficiency, scalability, and strategic decision-making (L'Écuyer and Raymond, 2023). Secondly, the customization and flexibility of e-HRM platforms are of paramount importance to SMEs. Furthermore, the engagement of SMEs with e-HRM platforms often entails a focus on enhancing employee engagement and talent management (Njoku et al., 2019). Lastly, the interaction between SMEs and e-HRM platforms underscores the importance of support and training services from e-HRM providers. In summary, when SMEs function as customers of e-HRM platforms, the engagement brings forth a dynamic interplay of digital transformation, customized solutions, compliance facilitation, talent management enhancement, and the necessity for robust support and training (Cantoni and Mangia, 2018). This engagement ultimately contributes to SMEs' strategic HR objectives, aiding in their growth, adaptability, and competitive positioning in the market.

Supplier management

Within the domain of e-HRM platforms, entities that supply the necessary technology, services, and expertise for e-HRM system implementation and upkeep are referred to as suppliers. This group includes a wide variety of providers, from software development companies and IT service organizations to consulting firms specializing in HR and organizational growth (Pyszka, 2018). The role of these suppliers is crucial within the e-HRM ecosystem; they provide not just the technological foundation essential for the smooth operation of e-HRM platforms but also strategic insights and support to enhance HRM practices (Kerwin, 2022).

When consultancy professionals serve as suppliers in the e-HRM framework, their contribution goes beyond simply offering software solutions and technical aid. These professionals bring an extensive understanding of HR practices, compliance with industry norms, and regulatory requirements, thus providing tailored strategies and recommendations that align with their clients' specific needs and objectives (Wirtky et al., 2016). In their role, consultants are pivotal in evolving traditional HR functions towards more efficient, strategic, and data-informed practices, offering a range of services from strategic planning and customization of solutions to training and ongoing improvement (Škudienė et al., 2020). These consultants are now primarily composed of gig workers. In fact, the role of suppliers is particularly significant within the gig economy, a sector defined by short-term contracts and flexible work arrangements, which presents distinct challenges and opportunities for HRM (Tripathi et al., 2021).

The rise of gig economy has prompted a significant shift in HRM, as organizations adapt to a workforce increasingly comprised of gig workers — individuals engaged in temporary, flexible jobs, often as independent contractors or freelancers rather than traditional employees (Friedman, 2014). This shift necessitates innovative approaches to manage a dispersed and diverse workforce effectively, addressing challenges such as economic instability, lower productivity, reduced independence, and increased personal debt (Berg et al., 2010).

METHOD

To identify the key success factors from both the customer and supplier perspectives, we conducted a survey utilizing two distinct yet methodologically aligned questionnaires, ensuring coherence with the research questions: one targeting 87 SMEs, classified as customers, and the other targeting 82 consultants, classified as suppliers. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software, applying a range of statistical techniques to derive meaningful insights. A mean analysis was conducted to ascertain the central tendency of the data, thus facilitating an evaluation of the overall characteristics of the datasets. Additionally, a one-way Anova was conducted to examine the differences between group means, assessing whether there are statistically significant variations among them. Lastly, a correlation analysis was conducted to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables, providing insights into their association without implying causation.

Survey instrument

Two distinct questionnaires were developed, sharing certain common elements and structured as follows: the SME questionnaire examined their interest in e-HRM platforms, as well as the size and characteristics of their businesses, based on insights from the literature review. Additionally, it included demographic variables such as gender, age, and professional role. Conversely, the supplier questionnaire incorporated a section evaluating their expertise and interest in e-HRM platforms, alongside the same set of variables assessed in the customer survey to examine key factors identified in the literature review. To facilitate ease of response and align with precedents in the field (Ayyıldız and Şahin, 2022), a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7 was employed. The validity and relevance of the survey questions were corroborated through an evaluation by two academic experts with specialization in e-HRM platform research, alongside three managers actively engaged in the field of e-HRM platforms.

Customers' sample characteristics

Survey data were collected in February 2024. Participants were contacted through posts and direct messages on LinkedIn and Instagram, and through email. They were then invited to read information about the research project and its purpose, and to complete the questionnaire administered online through a direct link. The samples were therefore reached through a random search on different social media. This methodology was able to reach people, either CEOs, managers or employees, working in SMEs. Each respondent was over 18 years old. An overall summary of the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Sociodemographic characteristics

		SMEs Survey	
	Characteristics	Number of times (n=87)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	55	63%
	Male	30	35%
	Prefers not to specify it	2	2%
Age	18-30 years	14	16%
	31-55 years	33	38%
	More than 55 years	40	46%
Role	CEO	16	18%
	Employee/Freelancer	28	33%
	Manager	43	49%

Source: Author's elaboration

The survey was created and managed using the Google Forms platform. Collected data were analyzed using SPSS v.28 Software. The survey was created in order to analyze the enterprises' dimensions, the interest in e-HRM platforms and the interest in the variables analyzed. A total of 100 surveys were collected, of which 13 were discarded because they were incomplete. Thus, the total number of valid questionnaires is

87, considered sufficient for this quantitative research since Petrişoia and Nicolae (2012) and Parameswari et al. (2020) collected both 85 surveys.

Customers' measurements

Regarding SMEs customers' questionnaire, the questions explained following come from the study of the literature on the topic. As a first attempt, it has been decided

to ask respondents the dimensions of the enterprise they were working, dividing the answers in microenterprises (1-10 employees) or SMEs (11-250 employees).

It has then been decided to analyze on the Likert scale mentioned above how much would they be interested on collaborating with an e-HRM platform (Mutepfa and Tapera, 2019).

Furthermore, to better understand SMEs' preferences, respondents were asked (on the Likert scale mentioned above ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)) what might be the relevant factors important for their collaboration with e-HRM platforms: 1. Process efficiency; 2. Data-driven solutions; 3. Employee well-being; 4. Enhanced employee performance; 5. Employee management; 6. Modernization; 7. Sustainability; 8. Strategic advantages. These variables were studied during the literature

analysis made (Ruël et al., 2004; Marler, 2009; Parry and Tyson, 2011; Schalk et al., 2013; Islam, 2016; Bondarouk et al., 2017; Scholz, 2018; Abdulrahim Zaid, 2019; Fernandez, 2019; Solayappan and AP, 2019; Azizi et al., 2021; Grubi and Mahmutaj, 2021; Vahdat, 2022; Alshibly and Alzubi, 2022). In the next sections, the results obtained by applying the analyses mentioned above are presented and discussed.

Data analysis on customers' needs

To enhance the understanding of the customers interviewed sample, an analysis of the responses from the questionnaire concerning SMEs was performed. Initially, to comprehend the composition of the sample, a frequency analysis was carried out. It was observed, as indicated in Table 2, that the respondents were from 33 micro-enterprises (up to 10 employees), and 54 SMEs (11-250 employees).

Table 2 - Frequencies analysis on enterprises' dimensions

Variables	Number of times (87)	Percentage (%)
Microenterprises	33	40%
SMEs	54	60%

Source: Author's elaboration

To ascertain which of these eight variables was of greatest interest to the respondents, based on the dimension of the enterprise they were employed, an analysis of the means was conducted. It was noted in Table 3 that the variable of highest interest to the interviewed sample was employee management, followed by enhanced employee performance and employee wellbeing. Regarding the means

of micro-enterprises, the relevant variables are the same, while for SMEs the most important one is employee management, followed by strategic advantages variable and employee well-being. Meaning that for SMEs respondents, enhanced employee performance is not so important as for micro-enterprises.

Table 3 – Interest in e-HRM variables

Variables	Sample Mean	Microenterprises	SMEs
Employee management	4.21	4.00	4.32
Enhanced employee performance	4.09	3.80	3.53
Employee well-being	3.91	3.73	4.00
Strategic advantages	3.90	3.53	4.09
Data-driven solutions	3.82	3.63	3.91
Modernization	3.80	3.50	3.96
Process efficiency	3.51	3.03	3.75
Sustainability	3.30	3.13	3.39

Source: Author's elaboration

Subsequently, a one-way Anova was conducted, taking into account the eight variables of the study and analyzing them in relation to the role where the respondents

were employed, namely CEOs, Managers and Employee/Freelancer. Table 4 illustrates that only the variable of Sustainability is slightly significant.

Table 4 - Anova on role and e-HRM variables

Variables	F	Sign.
Process efficiency	2.361	0.101
Data-driven solutions	3.716	0.028
Employee well-being	3.404	0.038

Enhanced employee performance	1.567	0.214
Employee management	4.227	0.018
Modernization	2.804	0.066
Sustainability	2.059	0.134
Strategic advantages	1.798	0.172

Source: Author’s elaboration

To gain a more detailed understanding of which of the eight variables were of most interest to the respondents, it was decided to conduct a correlation analysis using the eight variables as independent variables, cross-referenced with the overall interest in e-HRM platforms as the dependent

variable. The analysis showed significant correlations. As depicted in Table 5, the analysis indicated that five variables were significant or slightly significant: Process efficiency, Employee wellbeing, Enhanced Employee Performance, Sustainability and Strategic Advantages.

Table 5 - Correlation analysis on the overall importance on e-HRM variables

Variables	Correlations	Sign.
Process efficiency	0.194	0.072
Data-driven solutions	0.156	0.149
Employee well-being	0.239	0.026
Enhanced employee performance	0.209	0.052
Employee management	0.183	0.089
Modernization	0.145	0.181
Sustainability	0.209	0.052
Strategic advantages	0.235	0.029

Source: Author’s elaboration

Suppliers’ sample characteristics

As stated earlier, survey data were collected in February 2024. Participants were contacted through posts and direct messages on LinkedIn and Instagram, and through email. They were then invited to read information about the research project and its purpose, and to complete the questionnaire

administered online through a direct link. The sample was therefore reached through a random search on different social media. This methodology was able to reach suppliers working in the Italian context. Each respondent was over 18 years old. A summary of the respondents’ sociodemographic characteristics is shown in Table 6.

Table 6 - Sociodemographic characteristics

		Supplier Survey	
	Characteristics	Number of times (n=82)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	56	68%
	Male	25	31%
	Prefers not to specify it	1	1%
Age	18-30 years	32	39%
	31-55 years	46	56%
	More than 55 years	4	5%
Overall working Experience	0-2 years	27	33%
	3-5 years	23	29%
	6-10 years	7	8%
	More than 10 years	25	30%

Source: Author’s elaboration

The survey was created and managed using the Google Forms platform. Collected data were analyzed using SPSS v.28 software. The survey was adopted to examine the interest and expertise in e-HRM platforms and the interest in the variables analyzed. A total of 100 surveys were collected, of which 18 were discarded because they were incomplete. Thus, the total number of valid questionnaires is 82, considered a good number since Petrișoia and Nicolae (2012) and Carmen and Pop (2012) collected both 85 surveys.

Suppliers' measurements

Regarding suppliers' questionnaire, a quantitative analysis was conducted to evaluate their perception of the significance of these key success factors identified in literature. As a first attempt, it has been decided to ask respondents if they had experience with e-HRM platforms (Cuadros et al., 2021). There were two possible answers: yes or no.

It has then been decided to analyze on the Likert scale mentioned above how much would they be interested on collaborating with an e-HRM platform (Mutepe and Taper, 2019).

Furthermore, to better understand respondents' preferences they were asked (on the Likert scale mentioned

above ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)) what might be the relevant factors important for their collaboration with e-HRM platforms: 1. Process efficiency; 2. Data-driven solutions; 3. Employee well-being; 4. Enhanced employee performance; 5. Employee management; 6. Modernization; 7. Sustainability; 8. Strategic advantages. These variables were studied during the literature analysis made (Ruël et al., 2004; Marler, 2009; Parry and Tyson, 2011; Schalk et al., 2013; Islam, 2016; Bondarouk et al., 2017; Scholz, 2018; Abdulrahim Zaid, 2019; Fernandez, 2019; Solayappan and AP, 2019; Azizi et al., 2021; Grubi and Mahmutaj, 2021; Vahdat, 2022; Alshibly and Alzubi, 2022). In the next section, the results obtained by applying the analyses mentioned above are presented and discussed.

Data analysis on suppliers' needs

To enhance the understanding of the interviewed sample, an analysis of the frequencies from the questionnaire regarding consultants was conducted. The findings, as depicted in Table 7, indicate that out of 82 respondents, 11 possess expertise in e-HRM platforms, while the remaining 71 have no expertise in e-HRM platforms.

Table 7 - Frequencies analysis on expertise

Variables	Number of times (82)	Percentage (%)
Expertise in e-HRM	11	14%
No expertise in e-HRM	71	86%

Source: Author's elaboration

Drawing on the analyses found in existing literature, a decision was made to assess the mean responses in order to determine which variables were of greatest interest to the respondents. According to this examination, detailed in Table 8, Modernization was identified as the paramount variable, followed by Strategic advantages and Employee well-being. To further delve into this analysis of mean responses, expertise in e-HRM platforms was also incorporated as a variable. This analysis revealed that those with expertise in e-

HRM platforms show a particular interest in Modernization, followed by Process efficiency and Strategic advantages. Conversely, those without expertise in e-HRM platforms generally exhibit a higher mean interest across the variables when compared to those with expertise. This in-depth analysis reaffirmed the importance of the variables identified in the general mean analysis, thus, Modernization, followed by Strategic advantages and Employee well-being, were confirmed as key variables of interest.

Table 8 - Interest in e-HRM variables

Variables	Mean	Expertise in e-HRM	No expertise in e-HRM
Modernization	5.92	5.09	6.05
Strategic advantages	5.46	4.18	5.66
Employee well-being	5.28	4.00	5.47
Process efficiency	5.14	4.72	5.21
Employee management	5.07	4.00	5.23
Sustainability	5.00	3.81	5.18
Enhanced employee performance	4.95	4.09	5.08
Data-driven solutions	4.16	3.81	4.19

Source: Author's elaboration

Subsequently, a one-way Anova was conducted, considering the eight variables of the study and analyzing them in relation to the two variables of expertise in e-HRM platforms. This analysis reveals six out of eight variables statistically significant, as illustrated in Table 9. Indeed, only

Process efficiency and Data-driven solutions were not significant; while the most significant was Strategic advantages, followed by Employee well-being and Employee management.

Table 9 – One-way Anova on expertise and e-HRM variables

Variables	F	Sign.
Process efficiency	1.014	0.317
Data-driven solutions	0.487	0.487
Employee well-being	8.344	0.005
Enhanced employee performance	3.323	0.072
Employee management	7.012	0.010
Modernization	4.533	0.036
Sustainability	6.060	0.016
Strategic advantages	9.965	0.002

Source: Author’s elaboration

To delve deeper and identify which variables were of greatest interest, a correlation analysis was conducted to determine which, among the eight variables, was the most

critical in relation to interest in e-HRM platforms. The correlation proved all variables analyzed to be significant, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10 - Correlation analysis on the overall importance of e-HRM variables

Variables	Correlations	Sign.
Process efficiency	0.262	0.018
Data-driven solutions	0.283	0.010
Employee well-being	0.178	0.109
Enhanced employee performance	0.316	0.004
Employee management	0.284	0.010
Modernization	0.289	0.008
Sustainability	0.244	0.027
Strategic advantages	0.317	0.004

Source: Author’s elaboration

DISCUSSION

These analyses have highlighted the significant relevance of key success factors from both the customer and supplier perspectives. A closer examination of mean responses reveals that Employee management captures the highest interest among customers, with Enhanced employee performance and Employee wellbeing following closely behind. Subsequent correlation analysis predominantly highlights Employee wellbeing and Strategic Advantages as the variables of foremost interest to SMEs, with Sustainability also garnering notable attention.

To identify the key success factors, an analytical framework was developed to assess both perceived importance (ranging from 0 to 0.5, with a total mean of 0.2) and level of interest (measured on a 1 to 7 scale) associated with these factors. Reflecting on the correlation analysis outcomes, it is possible to stratify the importance of different variables, as illustrated in Figure 1. This stratification elucidates the priorities of SMEs with respect to e-HRM platforms, particularly highlighting the critical significance of Employee well-being, Strategic advantages, and Enhanced employee performance among the eight variables considered. Employee Management and Data-driven solutions,

conversely, emerge as areas interesting but where managers and theorists might afford to place less importance. Sustainability is identified as a significant variable from the perspective of SMEs' customers, while Modernization and Process efficiency are deemed less critical from the

customer's standpoint but remain pertinent within the e-HRM platform context. In constructing this matrix, it is important to mention that five variables in Table 5 did emerge as significant factors, while the other were not significant.

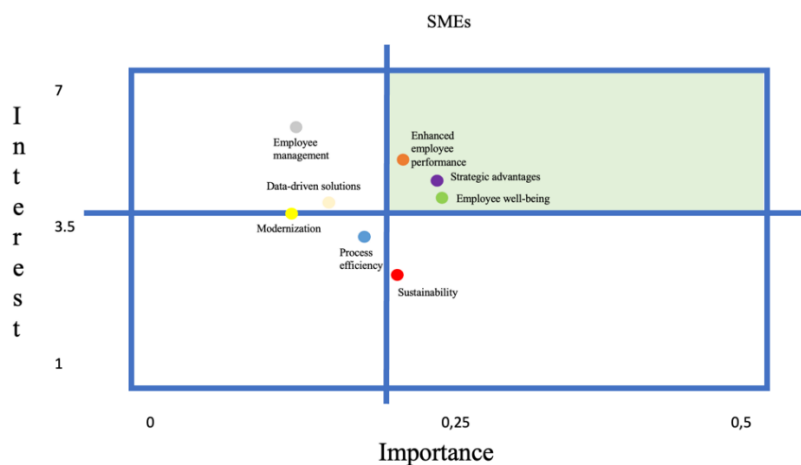


Figure 1 – Key success factors in customers' management side

Source: Author's elaboration

From the supplier's perspective there exists a high level of interest in e-HRM platforms. Findings indicate that individuals experienced in e-HRM platforms, particularly value Modernization, alongside Process efficiency and Strategic advantages. In contrast, those lacking experience tend to show greater overall interest in these areas. This detailed investigation reinforces the significance of Modernization, Strategic advantages, and Employee well-being as primary areas of interest. Overall, the analyses reveal that suppliers comparatively exhibit slightly higher ratings on the variables compared to customers.

Subsequent statistical analyses, a correlation analysis pinpointed Enhanced employee performance, Modernization and Strategic Advantages as the paramount concern for both managers involved in e-HRM platform development and academic theorists.

The examination of mean responses highlighted Modernization as particularly attractive, with Strategic advantages and Employee well-being also ranking highly. Moreover, the results on means (ranging from 0 to 0.5, with a total mean of 0.27) and correlation analyses (measured on a 1 to 7 scale), illustrated in Figure 2, further delineate Strategic advantages and Modernization as pivotal, while Sustainability received comparatively lesser attention. Nevertheless, Employee well-being and Process efficiency demand managerial attention due to their perceived relevance. Conversely, Employee management, Data-driven solutions, and Enhanced employee performance, though slightly less prioritized, remain critical from an e-HRM platform perspective. In constructing this matrix, it is important to mention that only all the variables in Table 10 did emerge as significant variables.

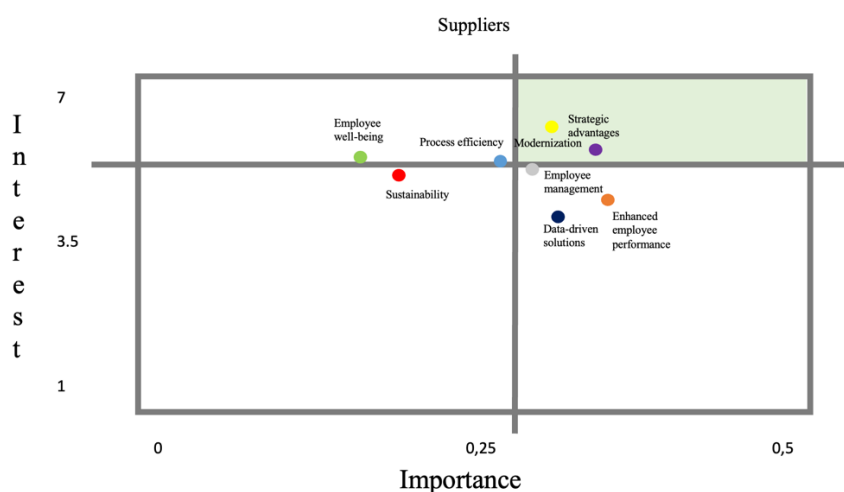


Figure 2 - Key success factors in suppliers' management side

Source: Author's elaboration

In terms of these findings, it becomes feasible to identify which services hold the greatest appeal for both SMEs and consultants, thus facilitating an understanding of the essential services required for the construction of an e-HRM platform framework. Figure 3 arranges these services ranking them in order of strategic importance, based on the analyses conducted in Figures 1 and 2, highlighting the most significant ones. This allows to assert that from the customer's perspective (right side of the figure), the emphasis should initially be on Enhanced Employee Performance, Employee Well-being, and Strategic Advantages. The

services of Employee management, Data-driven solutions and Sustainability, should then be considered. On the customer side, however, services related to Modernization and Process efficiency should not be prioritized. From the supplier's perspective (left side of the figure), the primary focus should be on Strategic Advantages and Modernization; followed by other functions deemed always important but less critical: Process Efficiency, Employee Well-being, Employee Management, Enhanced Employee Performance and Data-driven Solutions. Sustainability is the least considered, perceived as not at all important by suppliers.

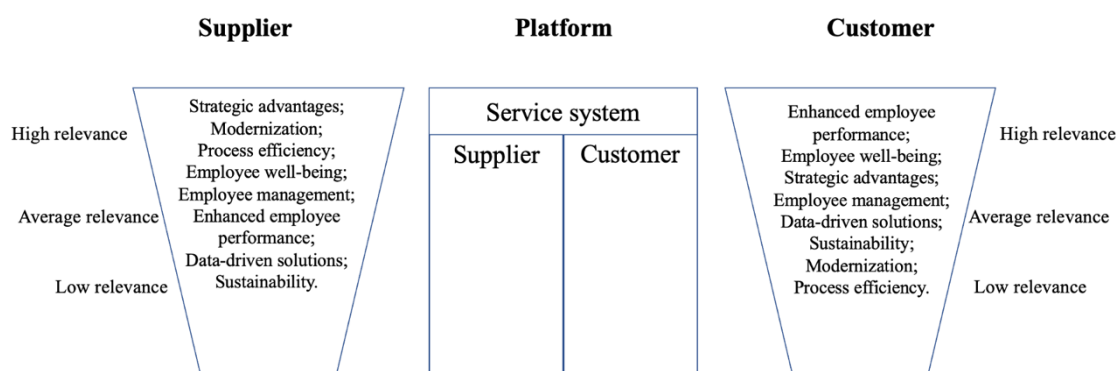


Figure 3 - E-HRM framework considering customer and supplier management sides

Source: Author's elaboration

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, two quantitative analyses were conducted—one focusing on customers and the other on suppliers—to gauge the key success factors of e-HRM platforms. Overall, it can be inferred that suppliers exhibit a greater interest compared to customers. Subsequent analyses were performed to identify which variables found in literature were of most interest to respondents. This process enabled the creation of a theoretical framework found in literature into the context of e-HRM platforms. It was observed that, from the customers' perspective, theorists and industry managers should initially place emphasis on Enhanced employee performance, Employee well-being, and Strategic advantages. Consideration should then be given to Employee management, Data-driven solutions and Sustainability. From the customers' standpoint, however, services pertaining to Modernization and Process efficiency should not be given priority. From the suppliers' perspective, the primary focus should be on Strategic advantages and Modernization; followed by other functions considered important but to a lesser extent: Process Efficiency, Employee Well-being, Employee Management, Enhanced Employee Performance and Data-driven Solutions. Sustainability is viewed as the least important consideration, perceived as negligible by suppliers.

Theoretical and managerial implications

This analysis yields significant implications. From a theoretical standpoint, while some scholars have attempted to outline a framework for sharing economy platforms, this study represents one of the first endeavor to develop a framework within the e-HRM platforms that examines the key success factors from both customer and supplier sides. This provides sector theorists with a foundational point from which to further explore these studies and establish a theoretical base.

From a managerial perspective, this paper can contribute to assisting companies operating in the sector by offering a guideline for creating an e-HRM platform and selecting the key success factors to implement. This dual approach not only enriches the academic discourse surrounding e-HRM platforms but also provides pragmatic, actionable insights for practitioners seeking to optimize their HRM strategies within the dynamic context of the SE.

Limitations and future research

Regarding the limitations associated to this study, it must be acknowledged that the sample sizes for both questionnaires were relatively small. This is in line with the methodology of previous research where authors, such as Petrișoia and Nicolae (2012) and Parameswari et al. (2020), also utilized limited sample sizes. Another limitation is that the sample was exclusively drawn from the Italian context,

suggesting that future research could benefit from analyzing a more diverse and geographically expansive sample. Lastly, not all variables included in the framework were significant.

Considering the early developing phase of the studied phenomenon, several avenues for future research analysis can be identified. *From the platform side*, an intriguing avenue for exploration lies in undertaking empirical research to comprehensively develop and assess the actual functionality and utility of e- HRM platforms. Future developments could focus on refining the framework, particularly from the perspective of SMEs, by adding more keywords in the analysis to fully express the issues and open paths for further studies. Additionally, future quantitative research could benefit from analyzing a more diverse and geographically expansive sample of e-HRM functions practices across cultures and different markets. This approach would not only identify potential lines of convergence for e-HRM but also provide a more nuanced understanding of e-HRM platform dynamics.

From the customer side, there is a compelling case for expanding the customers sample in future studies to strengthen the framework's applicability. Such expansion could yield more significant variables, reinforcing the importance of analyzed variables from the customer's perspective. Future research efforts could focus on assessing the actual functionality and utility of e-HRM platforms specifically for SMEs, incorporating additional keywords to fully express the issues. Moreover, examining e-HRM practices across cultures and different markets would provide insights into potential convergence points and enhance understanding from the customer's standpoint. *From the supplier side*, future research could assess the actual functionality and utility of e-HRM platforms, particularly from the suppliers' perspective. Expanding suppliers' sample in future studies could reinforce the importance of analyzed variables from the supplier's point of view. Additionally, exploring e-HRM functions practices across cultures and different markets would identify potential lines of convergence and contribute to a more robust validation of the applicability of the framework across various contexts.

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