

Effectiveness of Staff Training on the Performance of Hotels in Kisumu City, Kisumu County, Kenya

Rosemary Malonza¹, Phyllis Walaba²

¹Kisii University, School of Business Management & Economics, P.O Box 6434-30100, Eldoret, Kenya

²University of Kabianga, School of Business & Economics, P.O Box 2030-20200 Kericho

Abstract: *The hotel industry is one of the fastest growing economic sectors globally. Its impact to economic development of a country cannot be underscored. As evidenced in Kenya, international hotel chains are opening their branches to maximize market opportunities available. One of the key attributes to the success of hotel industries is the kind of training staff undergoes for effective service delivery in the hotel industry. This is for the reason that staff training and development has been identified by different scholars as an aspect of achievement and business growth in the hotel industry. However, there exists paucity of literature in the country on staff training. This paper therefore, seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of hotel staff training on performance of hotel industry in Kisumu city, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Quantitative and qualitative research approaches of data collection were adopted using a questionnaire which was distributed to 120 respondents. Data collection instruments for this study were unstructured and semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Qualitative research helped in obtaining insights about the phenomena in question and identifying the missing part of what is unknown and/or partially known. The study found that employee training plays a key role in improving employee's productivity in hotels. However, the major challenge was that the trainings are not frequently conducted. It was also evident that hotel staffs are motivated by positive customer service. The study recommends that there is need to conduct training needs assessment to ensure that trainings are needs driven. This will enhance the competitiveness of the staff as they will be equipped with necessary competencies and current trends within the hotel industry. Finally, training in hotel industry should be continuous to be able to update the employees of the changing trades in the industry for better performance.*

Keywords: Effectiveness, Staff Training, Performance of Hotels, Kisumu City, Kenya

1. Introduction

The hotel industry is one of the fastest growth sectors of the global economies. Its significant contribution is seen to be on an upward trend, as evidenced in India, Kenya and other developing nations. In the environment under which hotel industry operates, require a skilful workforce in order to remain a successful player in the competitive game of the industry. In the current world the hotel industry services will be the difference between barely surviving and achieving success. Providing high quality services and improving customer satisfaction are widely recognized as fundamental factors boosting the performance of hotels (Dominici, 2010). Onyango et al (2012) found that the hotel industry has experienced enormous growth in business volume thereby making them larger and more complex to manage and meet challenges of customer demands. With the increased bargaining power consumers are obtaining, hotel corporations are realizing that the key to their success will be to foster strategic relationship marketing efforts, particularly through the effective staff training (Gordon, 2006). According to Schultz (2012), for a hotel to lead in customer retention and loyalty, they have to offer superior quality service as compared to its competitors (Zeithamal, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990).

One of the main obstacles which occur in the workplace is the lack of training and development. Training is an essential process which should be cautiously designed and implemented within all firms (Ahammad, 2013). Many studies such as (Armstrong, 1992; Dessler, 2006; Analoui, 2007; Woods, 2006; Sommerville, 2007) have focused on staff training in different business sectors and industries, but devoted little effort to the hotel industry. Their researches

mainly focus on human resources in the hotel industry, thus creating need for research on staff training at all levels of management for better understanding of the nature of hotel' operations.

International hotel chains have continued to open its branches everywhere to reap the market rewards from this competitive industry. This industry provides necessary and desirable goods and services to travelers worldwide. The growth of hotel industry has seen fast growth in many economies of developed and developing nations. However, the standards of facilities and services offered by this industry have evolved over the last decade towards the extensive use of technology, environment friendly services, pricing, market segmentation and regional preferences, making the sector one of the most competitive sectors in all economies (McCourt & Eldridge, 2003).

In Kenya, the hotel industry has seen a significant growth in room inventory across categories from upscale luxury to limited services and, boutique and budget hotels. The occupancy and the room rates have seen continued gains both from the domestic and the international traveler in both the business and leisure segment. The government has stepped up various reforms to accelerate the industry growth with liberalization in the regulatory framework, investment friendly schemes, and extensive support for creating a world class infrastructure, initiating better air and land connectivity. Training tends to be more specific whereby the trainer teaches specific skills and knowledge to the trainee in order to obtain specific goals and skills required to operate within the systems and standards set by management for their present position.

Armstrong (2000) believes that training especially in the hotel industry has a direct relationship with the performance of the employees. There are two basic types of training which are applicable to the hotel industry. These are, on job training and off job training. On Job training is done when an employee gets the training while performing his or her assigned task. Off Job training is a type of training which employees undertake when the organization calls them for a training session (Sommerville, 2007).

The hospitality industry, from which hotels are a main part, is service intensive and consequently relies heavily on its human resources. For a whole hotel to operate smoothly, it needs the involvement of staff of all departments: from the departments directly dealing with guests like Front Office, Housekeeping, Food and Beverages to back-office departments such as Accounting or Engineering. How their works is managed directly impacts to the service, thus to the guests' satisfaction (Hayes & Ninemeier2009). Encompassing these, are different training methods depending on employees need which range from On-the-job training, informal training, classroom training, internal training courses, external training courses, on-the-job coaching, life coaching, mentoring, training assignments and tasks, skills training, product training, technical training, behavioral development training, role-playing and role-play games and exercises, attitudinal training and development, accredited training and learning.

Analoui (2007) observes that majority of hotel Industry believe in on-going professional education which they deem necessary for every employee. Therefore there is a great emphasis on on-job staff training for the hotel industries worldwide. All employees need training and development no matter what industry they are in since staff training is an essential and indispensable part of Human Resource Management. The importance and value of staff training has long been recognized and further echoed McClelland (2002) that give a person a fish and you feed him for a day, teach a person to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.. There are various reasons that lead an organization to consider training for their employees. Among these are; globalization, need for leadership, increased value placed on intangible assets and human capital, focus on link to business strategy, customer's services and quality emphasis, new technology, high performances model at work system, economic changes and attracting and retaining talent.

Training and development are often used to close the gap between current performance and expected future performance. Training and development falls under human resource development function which has been argued to be an important function of human resource management (Weil & Woodall, 2005). Daniels (2008) mentions that current economic situation tempts organizations to cut their training budgets, but temptation is not legitimate as training offers an organization opportunities to boosts morale and commitment of employees by showing them that they are a valued and important resource. The training itself provides skills and enthusiasm to help participants provide amazing customer service and great customer experiences which lead to service acceptability.

Chow, Haddad and Singh (2007) studying 46 hotels in San Diego found that training and development, boosted the hotels' employee morale, productivity and job satisfaction which in turn improves managers' morale. When staffs are not trained the employee will not be able to help a client the way they should, the client will be left unsatisfied by the hotel's service level, and lastly the employee will become frustrated by the company and his or her service level will drop to a minimum (Ryan, 2008). Employees are major assets of any organization and the active role they play towards a company's success cannot be underestimated. Therefore, equipping these unique assets through effective training becomes imperative in order to maximize the job performance.

To have effective training, an organization should follow the training cycle which is a process that includes; assessing the training needs, planning the training, carrying out the training and evaluating the training. Normally any training starts with need assessment where by the difference between an ideal expect for employees' performances and the actual performances are rated (Breiter & Woods, 1997). Sriyam (2010) points out that guest satisfaction is the highest priority for hotel industry owners and managers competing with hundreds of others. This concern can be achieved by effective personal service delivery which travelers consider seriously when choosing a hotel to stay in. Over the years tailoring of customer service has seen more and more customers switch from one service provider to another, this is seen especially in the hotel sector where guests prefer a high level of service, and individual requirements are therefore much differentiated.

There is no doubt that organizations worldwide are striving for success and out competing those in the same industry. In order to do so, organizations have to obtain and utilize her human resources effectively. Organizations need to be aware of face more realistically towards keeping their human resources up-to date (Donovan et al. 2001). Staff training and development has been identified by various scholars to be very crucial to an organization and its effectiveness. In the light of the above, organizations are therefore encouraged to train and develop their staff to the maximum of their ability in order to enhance their effectiveness. Employee training and development are typically associated with the improving of the performance, knowledge and skills of employees in their present job position.

According to Ngirwa (2009), if an organization wants to remain competitive it has no choice but to train their employees. The amount, quality and quantity of employee training carried out vary extremely from organization to organization. Cole (2002), identified factors which influence the quantity and quality of employee training and development activities like; the degree of change in the external environment, the degree of internal change, the availability of suitable skills within the existing staffs and the extent to which management see training as a motivating factor in work.

Training and development are integral to a Hotel's growth and success. Hotels can however under-train their employees by being unwilling to take the time to explain new staff tasks

that need to be performed. When this unwillingness occurs, Ryan (2008) states that three scenarios may take place – Studies have shown that training programs increase employee satisfaction, employee morale and employee retention, and decrease turnover and hiring rates. Training has been shown to improve knowledge and in turn knowledge improves the delivery of hospitality business related activities.

Organizations are facing increased competition due to globalization, changes in technology, political and economic environments (Evans, Pucik & Barsoux, 2002) and therefore prompting these organizations to train their employees as one of the ways to prepare them for uncertainties and enhance their performance. It is important not to ignore the prevailing evidence on growth of knowledge in the business corporate world in the last decade. However, despite increasing effects on training of organizational employees by organizations, there is still limited literature on human resource development issues in hotel industry especially in Kenya (Debrah & Ofori 2006) and increasing concerns from organizational customers towards low quality services in the industry.

Performance appraisal in the hotel industry has taken a developmental approach, where the needs of staff are identified for the purpose of empowerment. This process can take up formal and informal forms (McCourt & Eldridge, 2003). The developmental approach includes providing performance feedback, identifying individual strengths/weaknesses, recognizing individual performance, assisting in goal identification, evaluating goal achievement, identifying individual training needs, determining organizational training needs, improving communication and allowing employees to discuss concerns.

It is worth noting that while much is known about the economics of training in the developed world, studies of staff training in hotel industry are rarely found. This has created a knowledge gap on the effectiveness of staff training on employee performance. This study will contribute in minimizing this gap in the literature and thereby establish the basis to understanding of some aspects of human resource management in general and training in particular Kenya.

Employee training plays a vital role in improving performance as well as increasing productivity. This in turn leads to placing organizations in the better positions to face competition and stay at the top. Studies have looked at performance from two perspectives: the employee performance and the performance of the particular organization. In a way both are relevant because they have a general impact to the organization employee performance has a direct impact on the performance of the organization. In relation to the above Wright & Geroy (2001) notes that employee competencies change through effective training program which improves the overall performance of the employees to effectively perform their current jobs, enhances knowledge, skills and attitude of the workers necessary for the future job. Bartlett, (2001) notes that training in hotel industry improves hotel profitability, commitment of staff, efficiency and competitiveness. Mohsin

Nadeem (2007) explained that for effective training there was need for hotels to have quality and frequent trainings in their premises. Apospori (2008) deduced that there was a training had considerable impact on organization performance. Donovan et al (2001) had a research and finding of that research was that employees are more active and quick in responding and accepting changes, built their inner confidence stronger and develop understanding to be supportive to their peers, once they participate in different type of training programs.

Despite the increasing effects of training employees on organization performance, there is still limited literature on effectiveness of employee training in the performance of hotel industries in developing countries. This is made worse by the increasing concerns from customers towards low quality services in the hotel industry sector. It is further worth noting that while much is known about the economics of training in the developed world, studies of issues associated with training in less-developed countries are rarely found. When they do they are more inclined to general Human resource management courses creating which leaves a knowledge gap on the effectiveness of employee training on the performance of hotel industries.

2. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design. A qualitative research approach of the data collection was adopted using a questionnaire which was distributed to 120 respondents. Data collection instruments for this study were unstructured and semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Qualitative research helped in obtaining insights about the phenomena in question and identifying the missing part of what is unknown or partially known. The study focused on training matters within the hotel industry using multiple sources of evidence within its real-life context. Simple random sampling was then applied when selecting respondents from the three hotels this was done to eliminate bias. Only primary data was collected during this study using a structured questionnaire administered to all service delivery employees from the selected hotels.

3. Results and Discussion

The study sought to find out if employees in selected hotels participate in training. The results are as shown below.

Table 1.1: Respondents Participation in Training

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	33	27.5%
No	87	72.5%
Total	120	100

As shown in table 1.1 above, majority 72.5% of the employees from hotel industry in Kisumu city indicated that they had not participated in any training at the hotel. A minority 27.5% indicated that they had been trained. This result implies that there is minimal training among employees in hotel industries in this area. An interview with managers sought to understand why there was minimal training within their hotels. Responses revealed that hotels don't have a culture of not training their staff because of the

nature of staff they have most of them are part-timers and there is usually a high turnover rate of staff in the industry. The managers also expressed that it is very expensive to train staff and they therefore assume that the school training is enough.

Table 1.2: Responses for Selection for Training

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>
On joining the company	40	33.3
Supervisors recommendation	34	28.3
Compulsory for all employees	16	13.3
Upon employee request	6	5
Performance appraisal	4	3.3
Don't know	20	16.7
Total	120	100.0

Table 1.2 above illustrates the result on how employees are selected for training in the hotels. The analysis above indicates that a large number (33%) of these respondents were selected on joining the hotels. As would be expected in many cases, 34 respondents were selected for training under the criteria of supervisor recommendation which is represented by a 28.3 %. It is however surprising that a minority 5% and 4% of the employees were trained upon request and after performance appraisal. A good number 16.7% indicated that they did not know the criteria of training. This finding implies that training among the selected hotel staff is not a common practice. The researchers were also interested in knowing the training schedule that the hotel had. Results are as shown in table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3: Training Schedule

<i>Training Schedule</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Valid Percentage</i>
Quarterly	3	2.5
After six months	9	7.5
Once a year	21	17.5
After two Years	30	25
Not specific schedule	57	47.5
Total	120	100.0

Table 1.3 show results for training schedule in selected hotels. Most 47.5% of the employees stated that there was no specific training schedule. This means that they had no particular training schedule whereby they would be required to participate in training anytime as planned by the management of the hotel. The other 25% of the respondents were seen to participate in training every two years, 17.5% participated once a year, 7.5% every six months and the rest of the respondents indicated that they were scheduled for training on a quarterly basis. Interview with managers revealed that there was no specific training schedule for the hotels. Most of the trainings were scheduled depending on arising need and when new employees were recruited. For new employees they were given on job training by the staff that already exists in the relevant department.

Table 1.4: Techniques used in Training

<i>Facilitation Method</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>
Lecturing	45	40.3
Discussion	16	10.0
Demonstration	40	33.3
Seminar	19	16.4
Total	120	100.0

Analysis in Table 1.4 presents a number of training techniques that are commonly used in training. These are important in understanding the different ways trainees receive training under the both the on-the-job and off-the-job training method classifications. As revealed above, the most common methods of facilitation identified by the respondents as prevailing during their trainings are lecturing (representing 40.3%). Thirty three percent (33%) of the respondents said that they were trained through demonstrations. The results from above analysis indicate that hotel industries strongly emphasis on the use of lecturing and demonstration techniques.

Table 1.5: Impact of Training on the Performance of the Respondents

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>
Yes	110	92.5%
No	16	7.5%
Total	120	100

The responses in Table 1.5 above were collected on the impact of training on the performance of the respondents from the sampled hotel. The results clearly indicate that over 110 respondents representing a great percentage of 92.5% link training to improvement of performance. This result is in concurrence with s lines with (Swart et al. 2005 and Harrison, 2000) which present that training impacts employee performance partly, through improving employee skills which enables them know and perform their jobs better. An interview with the hotel managers revealed that when employees are trained the sales volume of the hotel for that month increases. Additionally employees are happy and seem to be effective in time management and service delivery.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Findings from this study has shown that human resources management. It plays a vital role in the hospitality operation. Employee training plays a key role in the performance of the hotels. With training the employees productivity is increased, employees are motivated and better customer service delivery. Though an employee once recruited into a specific position is expected to best suit the job description, it is unlikely that he/she possesses all the skills and knowledge required and immediately becomes fully functioning.

The study found that newly recruited staffs often need extensive trainings and more time to learn the goals, rules, regulations, structure and their operating environment to acclimatize and get in the same pace with other colleagues. Therefore, this is where training takes its first role of guiding and helping the employees adjust their qualities fit to the organization needs as soon as possible. As well, in the hotel sector training acts as a strategic tool to implement the differentiation strategy by creating a team of high quality staff to provide an exceptional level of service and to meet customer expectations. From the findings of the study, it therefore, recommended that there is need to conduct staff needs assessment to ensure that trainings offered are needs driven. This will enhance the competitiveness of the staff in

service provision, as they will be equipped with necessary competencies and current trends and dynamics within the hotel industry. Finally, training in hotel industry should be continuous enhanced with refresher trainings to be able to update employees of the changing demands in the industry for better performance of the sector.

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