Assessing Employee Education and Training Factors in Customer Satisfaction of The South African Hospitality Industry

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Abstract

Implementing employee education and training in the hospitality industry is essential for increasing customer satisfaction in South Africa and other developing countries. This study assesses employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry. Structured questionnaires were distributed through random sampling techniques to 300 participants involved in the hospitality industry within Gauteng province in South Africa to collect data on employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry, out of which 260 were retrieved. Data collected through the questionnaire were computed using a descriptive statistical approach. Using a statistical data equation, a valid mean item score was determined in the study. The result of the survey indicated that trainers should be qualified, training programs meet training needs, reliable personnel, trainers should be knowledgeable, safety of personnel, adequate workforce, and training personnel on customer satisfaction were some of the highest employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry. The study suggests that to enhance customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry, there should be continuing training and re-training of employees. The study concluded that hospitality industry stakeholders should provide a job manual that can guide employees to understand better what is expected of them in meeting customer needs within their work organisation.

Keywords: Employee education and training; hospitality industry; hospitality professionals and Bed Breakfast, South Africa

1. Introduction

Employee education and training is a strategy for developing people within an organisation (Wescott, 2011). Increasing employee job knowledge and skills are the intended outcomes of employee education and training (Masoetsa et al., 2022). Organisations use employee education and training to update or alter the behaviour of employees for better and improved performance. Employee education and training are intended to upgrade job-related knowledge, attitudes, skills, and competencies for current and future job requirements. Employee education and training tactics include formal, informal, on-the-job, off-the-job, professional development, and other developmental learning initiatives such as onboarding and orientation programmes, customer service training, and technical skill learning training (Lowry et al., 2002). Employee education and training also ensure the organisation's survival and ability to realise its goals in dynamic business environments. Employee education training is established to offer several benefits to employees and companies through employee skills (Lee, 2012). Jeung, Yoon, Park, and Jo (2011) alluded that education and training increase employee skill levels and organisational performance. Moreover, employee education and training affect job satisfaction and commitment (Lowry et al., 2002).

However, businesses in the hospitality industry should focus on education and training methods and activities to improve their performance and growth. Furthermore, education and training have been demonstrated to enhance job satisfaction and commitment to the company (Chiang et al., 2005; Abina et al., 2023). Likewise, employees are considered a significant asset in any business organisation. Overall, any business organisation needs to capitalise on education and training programmes and establish a specialised education and training department (Kadiresan et al., 2015; Rawashdeh & Al-Adwan, 2012; Ramendram et al., 2014; Kakeesh & Ahmad, 2020). Furthermore, education and training increase fundamental organisational practices such as customer service, special discounts, credit sales, and services in the hospitality industry (Blume et al., 2009; Shen & Tang, 2018). According to Ocen et al. (2017), education and training impact service quality through a transactional and motivating process. Organisations profit from employee education and training and applying new skills, which results in fundamental changes in job

performance (Blume et al., 2009; Shen & Tang, 2018). Access to education and training correlates with industry commitment and intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction (Ocen et al., 2017). According to (Blume et al., 2009; Shen & Tang, 2018), there is a noticeable indirect relationship between employee education and training and service quality. Nonetheless, education and training provisions and opportunities to engage in organisational training programs enhance skills and knowledge. The study of Becker and Huselid (2006) posits that employee education and training factors in meeting customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry include qualified trainers, training programs meeting training needs, reliable personnel, and knowledgeable trainers. Combs et al. (2006) state that these factors include the safety of personnel, adequate workforce, training of personnel on customer satisfaction, and training on modern customer satisfaction. Paauwe (2009) alluded that these factors include time management, interpersonal skills development, and upgrading employee competencies.

Furthermore, Combs et al. (2006) alluded that that employee education and training factors in meeting customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry include on-job training on customer satisfaction, on job training personnel training on customer satisfaction, customer satisfaction training opportunities, cost of education and training, knowing organisational customer satisfaction policy, education & training on communication, and education in the shortage of essential skills. Becker and Huselid (2006) noted that criteria would also include integration of new techniques, training on problem-solving skills, workplace issue training, methods for choosing appropriate trainers, and resource management training. Paauwe (2009) mentioned that employee education and training factors in meeting customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry include customer satisfaction problem-solving skills training, integrating training methods, employee orientation programs and cultural differences. Moreover, Combs et al. (2006) alluded to Becker and Huselid (2006), stating that factors include employees' quest for new skills, usage of proper skills, semi-skilled personnel improvement, regular education and training for HR and Organizational commitment to training. Combs et al. (2006) alluded to employee self-development, usage of appropriate techniques, employees' commitment to training and regular seminars for HR. Hence, this study assesses employee education and training factors when developing a customer satisfaction model in the South African hospitality industry.

3. Methodology

This study was carried out within Gauteng province among South African hospitality industry stakeholders. The respondents were stakeholders in the hospitality industry, including customers, managers, owners, receptionists, housekeepers, caterers, security, and gardeners, specifically from hospitality industries within Gauteng, South Africa. Respondents for this study were selected based on their involvement and experience within hospitality industry activities. The province was chosen for this study because of the high volume of hospitality establishments and centres, including beds and breakfasts. Through the systematic random sampling method, 300 questionnaires were administered to the respondents, and 260 were retrieved. This study used the systematic random sampling method because it is more direct and eliminates the opportunity of clustering when used than cluster sampling, which breaks the population into diverse clusters and takes a simple random sample from each cluster (Rea & Parker, 2014; Ogunbayo et al., 2021) and covers all the elements evenly (Ogunbayo et al., 2023). Using 5 = to a very large extent, 4 = to a large extent, 3 =to some extent, 2 =to a small extent, and 1 = Not at all, questionnaires were designed on a 5-point Likert scale and recorded an 87% response rate. SPPS software was used to analyse the data for this study. The SPSS software generated the mean item score, the standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, and the ranks from the Excel spreadsheet obtained from the Google form with a total of 260 respondents (Pallant, 2020). Before analysing the data collected, the data collected were screened and cleaned to identify errors and, if possible, correct them (Ogunbayo et al., 2023). This screening process involves identifying outliers that may distort the study's data analysis and ensure internal consistency within the dataset. The respondents were asked questions about their years of experience and their designation in the hospitality industry. Through the questionnaire, respondents were further asked about thirty-seven employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry identified from the literature. The study conducted descriptive analysis, including percentage, frequency, mean item score, and standard deviation. This was conducted to examine the outcomes of the Likert inquiries about this research questionnaire. After computation, the employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction identified were sorted from the highest to lowest. The computation was based on the weighted responses from the survey participants for each question. It was also aligned with the scores chosen by the respondents that were deemed collectively as the analytically agreed indicators of comparative significance. This helped this study assess employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Also, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha determines the consistency, which then determines the reliability of the measuring instrument. The coefficient is most effective when the Likert scale is used, and in this study, the Likert scale is used to get responses from the relevant respondents (Pallant, 2020). The Cronbach's coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, and a Cronbach's Alpha score closer to 1.00 is acceptable. Hence, a Cronbach's value of 0.971 obtained in this study is suitable.

4. Results

Figure 1 below indicates the respondents' years of experience in the hospitality industry in relation to the customer experience of bed and breakfast. The results revealed that 30.0% (N=78) had been customers/guests of the bed and breakfast for less than 12 months; 30.4 % (N=79) had been customer/guests of the bed and breakfast for 1 - 5 years; 18.1% (N=47) had been customer/guests of the bed and breakfast for 6-10 years while 13.1% (N=34) had been customer/guests of the bed and breakfast for 11-15 years and 6.5% (N=17) had been customer/guests of the bed and breakfast for 16-20 years. Lastly, 1.9% (N=5) had been customers/guests of the bed and breakfast for over 21 years.
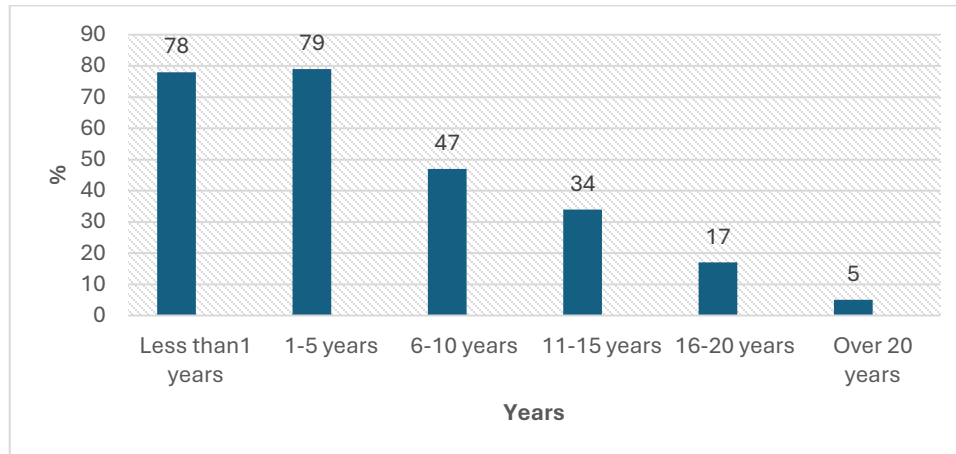

Figure: Respondents' years of experience in the hospitality industry

Figure 2 below is a breakdown of the respondents' descriptions of the hospitality industry. The result revealed that 31.90% (N=83) of the respondents were customers, 18.46% (N=48) were owners, 14.60% (38) were housekeepers, 11.15% (N=29) were receptionists, 5.38% (N=14) were caterers securities,10.00% (N=26) were security and 8.46% (N=22) were customers with the hospitality industry.
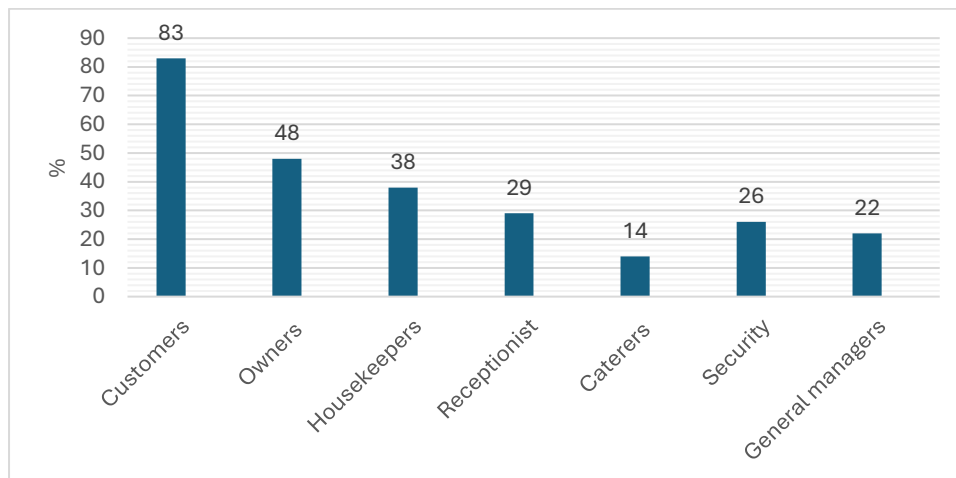

Figure 2: Respondents' Designation in the hospitality industry

Table 1 below-ranked respondents' level of agreement on the implementation of education and training in the South African hospitality industry using a 5-point Likert scale of 5 = to a very large extent, 4 = to a large extent; 3 =to some extent, 2 =to a little extent; and 1 = Not at all. The study analysed thirty-seven education and training variables in the hospitality industry that can help improve customer satisfaction in South Africa and other developing countries using the mean item scores (MIS) and standard deviation. According to the respondents' ranking, trainers who should be qualified were ranked 1st (MIS = 3.85; σ = 0.951), 2nd ranked was training programs meet training needs (MIS 3.85=; σ =0.954, 3rd ranked was reliable personnel (MIS = 3.84; σ = 0.871), 4th ranked was trainers should be knowledgeable (MIS = 3.84; σ = 0.964), 5th ranked was the safety of personnel (MIS =3.83; σ = 0.907), 6th ranked was effective workforce (MIS =3.81; σ = 0.914, 7th ranked was training of personnel on customer satisfaction (MIS = 3.78; σ =0.968

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),8th ranked was training on modern customer satisfaction (MIS =3.77; σ =0.950), 9th ranked was time management(MIS = 3.76; σ = o.933), 10th ranked was interpersonal skills development of (MIS =3.76; σ = 0.966),11th ranked was upgrading employee competencies (MIS = 3.75; σ =0.927), 12th ranked was on-job training on customer satisfaction (MIS = 3.74; σ = 0.974), and 13th ranked is on job training (MIS =3.73; σ =0.927).

Furthermore , the 14th factor is personnel training on customer satisfaction (MIS =3.73 ; σ =0.960),15th ranked is customer satisfaction training opportunities(MIS =3.72 ; σ =0.988), 16th ranked was cost of education and training (MIS = 3.70 ; σ = 0.906), 17th ranked was knowing organizational customer satisfaction policy (MIS =3.70 ; σ = 0.903), 18th ranked was education & training on communication (MIS =3.69 ; σ =0.986), 19th ranked is reduction in the shortage of essential skills (MIS = 3.68 ; σ = 0.902), 20th ranked is integration of new techniques (MIS =3.67 ; σ =0.957), 21st ranked is training on problem solving skills (MIS = 3.67 ; σ =1. 035), 22nd factor is workplace issue training (MIS = 3.67; σ =o.970), 23rd factor is methods for choosing appropriate trainers (MIS = 3.66; σ = 0.995) ,24th factor is resource management training (MIS =3.66; σ =0.991), and 25th factor is customer satisfaction problem solving skills training (MIS =3.66; σ =0.906).

Moreover, the 26th factor is integrating training methods(MIS =3.65 ; σ =0.937), 27th factor is employee orientation programs (MIS =3.64 ; σ = 0.966), 28th was cultural difference (MIS =3.63 ; σ = 0.972), 29th factor was employees' quest for new skills(MIS =3.62 ; σ =0.953) and 30th factor was usage of proper skills (MIS =3.62 ; σ = 0.882), 31st factor was semi-skilled personnel can do improve(MIS =3.62 ; σ =0.855), 32nd factor was regular education &training for HR (MIS = 3.60 ; σ =0.975),33rd factor was organizational commitment to training(MIS =3.60 ; σ = 0.947) and 34th factor was employee self-development (MIS =3.60 ; σ =0.931),usage of appropriate techniques(MIS = 3.58 ; σ =0.941, 36th was employees' commitment to training (MIS = 3.58 ; σ =0.945) and 37th was regular seminars for HR (MIS = 3.56 ; σ = 0.994).

Table 1: Employee education and training in the South African hospitality industry.

Customer satisfaction Employee education and training factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean score ranking (R)
Trainers should be qualified	3.85	0.951	1
Training programs meet training needs	3.85	0.954	2
Reliable personnel	3.84	0.871	3
Trainers should be knowledgeable	3.84	0.964	4
Safety of personnel	3.83	0.907	5
Effective workforce	3.81	0.914	6
Training of personnel on customer satisfaction	3.78	0.968	7
Training on modern customer satisfaction	3.77	0.950	8
Time Management	3.76	0.933	9
Interpersonal skills development	3.76	0.966	10
Upgrading employee competencies	375	0.927	11
On-job training on customer satisfaction	3.74	0.974	12
On job training	3.73	0.927	13
Personnel training on customer satisfaction	3.73	0.960	14
Customer satisfaction training opportunities	3.72	0.988	15
Cost of education and training	3.70	0.906	16
Knowing the organisational customer satisfaction policy	3.70	0.903	17
Education training in communication	3.69	0.986	18
Reduction in the shortage of essential skills	3.68	0.902	19
Integration of new techniques	3.67	0.957	20
Training on problem-solving skills	3.67	1.035	21
Workplace issue training	3.67	0.970	22
Methods for Choosing Appropriate Trainers	3.66	0.995	23
Resource management training	3.66	0.991	24
Customer satisfaction problem-solving skills training	3.66	0.906	25
Integrating training methods	3.65	0.937	26
Employee orientation programs	3.64	0.966	27

Cultural difference	3.63	0.972	28
Employees' quest for new skills	3.62	0.953	29
Usage of proper skills	3.62	0.882	30
Semi-skilled personnel can improve	3.62	0.855	31
Regular education and training for HR	3.60	0.975	32
Organisational commitment to training	3.60	0.947	33
Employee self-development	3.60	0.931	34
Usage of appropriate techniques	3,58	0,941	35
Employees' commitment to training	3,58	0,945	36
Regular seminars for HR	3,56	0,994	37

4. Discussion of Findings

The study assesses employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry. The result of the study indicated that trainers should be qualified, training programs meet training needs, reliable personnel, trainers should be knowledgeable, safety of personnel, adequate workforce, training of personnel on customer satisfaction, training on modern customer satisfaction, time management, interpersonal skills development, and upgrading employee competencies were the highest-ranked (1st – 11th) employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction within the hospitality industry. The findings align with Becker and Huselid (2006) that employee education and training factors in meeting customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry include qualified trainers, training programs meeting training needs, reliable personnel, and knowledgeable trainers were employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry. The findings are similar to Combs et al. (2006) study findings that the safety of personnel, adequate workforce, training of personnel on customer satisfaction, and training on modern customer satisfaction were employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry. The finding also aligns with Paauwe (2009), who states that time management, interpersonal skills development, and upgrading employee competencies are employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry.

The result of the study also indicated that on-job training on customer satisfaction, on job training, personnel training on customer satisfaction, customer satisfaction training opportunities, cost of education and training, knowing organisational customer satisfaction policy, education and training on communication, reduction in the shortage of essential skills, integration of new techniques, training on problem-solving skills, workplace issue training, methods for choosing appropriate trainers and resource management training were the middle-ranked (12th – 24th) employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction within the hospitality industry. The findings align with Paauwe (2009) that employee education and training factors in meeting customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry include on-job training on customer satisfaction, on job training, personnel training on customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction training opportunities were employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry. The findings are similar to those of Combs et al. (2006), who found that the cost of education and training, knowing organisational customer satisfaction policy and education, and training on communication employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry. The finding also aligns with Becker and Huselid (2006) that reduction in the shortage of essential skills, integration of new techniques, training on problem-solving skills, workplace issue training, methods for choosing appropriate trainers and resource management training were employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry.

The result of the study indicated that customer satisfaction problem-solving skills training, integrating training methods, employee orientation programs, cultural differences, employees' quest for new skills, usage of proper skills, and semi-skilled personnel could be improved through regular education and training for HR, organisational commitment to training, employee self-development, usage of appropriate techniques, employees' commitment to training and regular seminars for HR were the lowest-ranked (25th – 37th) employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction within the hospitality industry. The findings align with Becker and Huselid (2006) that employee education and training factors in meeting customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry customer satisfaction problem-solving skills training, integrating training methods, employee orientation programs and cultural differences were employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the south african hospitality industry. The findings are similar to those of Combs et al. (2006), who found that employees' quest for new skills, usage of proper

skills, and semi-skilled personnel were employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry. The finding also aligns with Paauwe (2009) that organisational commitment to training, employee self-development, usage of appropriate techniques, employees' commitment to training and regular seminars for HR were employee education and training factors in customer satisfaction in the South African hospitality industry.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The study assessed the implementation of employee education and training in the hospitality sector, as well as the impact of that implementation on customer satisfaction. It identified that trainers should be qualified, training programs meet training needs, reliable personnel, and trainers should be knowledgeable, the safety of personnel, effective workforce, training personnel on customer satisfaction, training on modern customer satisfaction, time management and interpersonal skills development as the leading activities used in employee education and training implementation activities in the hospitality industry. The study recognised that the activities mentioned above have high usage levels in the hospitality industry, which ensures adequate customer satisfaction.

The study findings show the positive contributions of employee education and training and its impact on the hospitality industry's customer satisfaction and overall efficiency. The study demonstrates the growing understanding of the importance of employee education and training in the hospitality industry and how it has enhanced customer satisfaction by incorporating effectiveness into hospitality operations. The study emphasised that the hospitality industry should incorporate the implementation of employee education and training for various benefits, including on job training, personnel training on customer satisfaction, customer satisfaction training opportunities, cost of education and training, knowing organisational customer, satisfaction policy, education & training on communication, reduction in the shortage of essential skills, integration of new techniques, training on problem-solving skills and workplace issue training.

The study's findings also show that employee education and training implementation in the hospitality industry is crucial for improving employee orientation programs, cultural differences, employees' quest for new skills, usage of proper skills, semi-skilled personnel can do improve, regular education training for HR, organisational commitment to training, employee self-development, usage of appropriate techniques, employees' commitment to training and regular seminars. This suggests a positive trend toward employees' quest for fresh knowledge, correct skills, and frequent education and training for HR to improve the hospitality industry and safeguard effective everyday operations.

Based on the study's findings, it is suggested that industry-inclusive guidelines and best practices for employee education and training implementation in the hospitality industry be established. This will ensure uniformity, interoperability, and data exchangeability within the hospitality industry and customers. The study recommends that there should be improved partnerships among the hospitality industry, employees, and customers regarding developing standard procedures for employee education and training implementation activities within the hospitality industry. The study recommends that the hospitality industry emphasise education and training programs, skill development initiatives, and continuous learning to improve employee education and training proficiencies within the hospitality industry. The study established that employee education and training implementation should involve individual skills, knowledge, and abilities of a resource and assist personnel in understanding certain aspects of the industry. The study also recommends emphasising factors such as training personnel on customer satisfaction, training employees on modern customer satisfaction, knowledgeable trainers, and effective workforce integration, which ensures adequate customer satisfaction and improves processes in the hospitality industry.

While the hospitality and construction industries differ in their primary focus (service delivery versus project completion), the underlying principles of customer satisfaction are remarkably similar. Both industries prioritise quality, timeliness, communication, customisation, feedback, and trust to achieve high customer satisfaction. By understanding these commonalities, stakeholders in each sector can apply best practices from the other to enhance their operations and better meet customer needs. Thus, the study concludes that regular improvement in employee education and training in both industries' activities play a vital role in ensuring customer satisfaction and restructuring future activities.

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