

In-Service Training Needs of Staff in Hospitality Industry in Nsukka, Enugu State

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Abstract

The general purpose of the study was to evolve the in-service training needs of hospitality industry staff in Nsukka, Enugu State. Specifically, the study determined the in-service training needs of staff in food and beverages, lodging, recreational, travel and tourism sections of the industry. The study adopted survey research design. Population was made up of 265 persons consisting of 82 staff in food/beverage, 102 staff in lodging, 21 staff in the recreation and 60 staff in the travel/tourism sections of the industry. Data were collected using questionnaire. Data were analyzed using weighted mean and improvement need index. Findings reveals that food and beverage staff need in-service training in 11 areas including, ability to: generate an attitude of trust among co-workers (\bar{X} = 0.72) and others. Lodging staff need in-service training in 13 areas including, ability to: work as part of a team (\bar{X} = 0.86), and others. Recreation staff need in-service training in 13 areas including, ability to: observe teamwork, cooperation and maximum support (\bar{X} = 0.94), and others; while travel/tourism staff need in-service training in 12 areas which include, ability to: show good communication and language proficiency (\bar{X} = 0.90), delivery information commentary (\bar{X} = 0.79) and so on. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that restaurant owners should provide funds for in-service training of their staff in areas where they are deficient to enhance customer patronage which in turn leads to higher profit.

Keywords: In-service, Training, Hospitality, Industry, Needs, Staff, Satisfaction, Customer, Performance.

Introduction

Hospitality refers to friendly reception and entertainment of guests, visitors or strangers. Hospitality involves making guests and visitors feel welcome and happy through service industry that includes lodging, event planning, theme parks, and transportation, (Robert 2016). Hospitality involves the relationship between hosts and guests in all domains, domestic and

commercial as well as their cultural settings (Blain & Lashley, 2014). Sheila et al (2018) also observed that hospitality is the act of kindness in welcoming and looking after the basic needs of guests or strangers, mainly in relation to food, drink and accommodation. It is a fundamental and ubiquitous feature of human life which entails making visitors or guests feel welcome and at home. Hospitality industry encompasses companies or

organizations or establishments which provide lodging, food, drink, event planning, accommodation or a combination of these services majorly for people away from their homes. It is one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy. The industry is diverse enough for people to work in different segments of interest, these segments include food and beverages, lodging, recreation, travels and tourisms.

The food and beverage industry is a company that involves in processing raw food materials, packaging and distributing them. According to Batinić (2013), food and beverage industry includes restaurants, taverns, grills, pizzerias, bistros, fast food facilities, patisseries, catering and canteens. In the opinion of Kukoyi and Iwuagwu (2015), the food and beverage industry play a significant role in the economic development of countries. According to Popova (2018), food & beverage is a term the hospitality industry uses to refer to all food and beverage needs for an event, dining experience or general catering. Occasionally, the food industry like restaurants can be situated in the lodging/accommodation industry.

Lodging commonly known as accommodation refers to a place to sleep for one or more nights. A business in the lodging industry provides a place for people to sleep overnight. According to Popova (2018), the lodging industry provides accommodation (and usually food and drink) to people who for whatever reason are away from home. According to Tesone and Ricci (2012), the most common example of lodging industry are hotels which provide meals, drinks, attractions, accommodation etc., to the general

public or persons in transit especially people travelling to places where they have neither their own homes or any relation to cater for their needs. Those who are lodged away from home could also need a form of recreation.

Recreation is any activity done for rest, relaxation, and enjoyment. In the opinion of Popova (2018), a major aim of recreation is to take time away from stressful activities and refresh a person's body and mind. According to Batinić (2013), businesses that provide series of activities for rest, relaxation, and enjoyment in order to refresh a person's body and mind is in the recreation business. The author further opined that recreation businesses are incredibly diverse because individuals have varying ideas on what activities they participate in for rest, relaxation and enjoyment. Popova (2018) further posited that four general types of recreation businesses exist namely: entertainment, attractions, spectator sports, and participatory sports. Usually, the service method with which service in hospitality industry is rendered determines if the customer will be satisfied or not. Besides the recreation industry, the travel industry is also an important part of the hospitality industry.

Travel involves going from one place to another, typically over a distance of some length. According to Medlik (2013), tourism means travelling for pleasure and spending at least one night in a different place, and it tends to be synonymous with holidays. According to Popova (2018), the travel industry is in the business of moving people from place to place while the

tourism industry provide those people with services that promote travel and vacations (Popova, 2018). The author further opined that planes, cabs, boats, and trains are all part of the travel industry while travel agencies, tour operators, cruise companies and convention planners are all part of the tourism industry. The travel/tourism sector as well as other sectors of the hospitality industry all aim to provide customer satisfaction.

Satisfaction of customer is paramount in the hospitality industry. Customer satisfaction refers to contentment on the part of the buyer of a good or service. In most hospitality industries, many of its current and future challenges in relation to customer satisfaction has to do with human resource issues (Samart, 2014). In line with this, Bilgihan, Peng and Kandampully (2014) stated that the greatest challenge facing hospitality industry today is the inadequate investment in staff training and delivery. According to Hvass and Munar (2012), shortages of skilled employees at all hierarchical levels including management have been reported throughout the food industry in many areas. Hvass and Munar (2012) further posited that the major reason for shortage of skilled employees in the food industry is lack of competency test before employing workers as well as poor assessment of training needs of existing hospitality industries workers needed for the present and the future.

Training is the process of imparting and acquiring skills. Before training hospitality staff, their needs have to be ascertained so as to identify areas they should be trained in. According to

Akani (2014), training needs are identified differences between the employees' current performance and the performance that the organization expects of them. In the opinion of McGehee and Thayer (2011), training needs come from under-developed skills, insufficient knowledge or inappropriate worker attitudes. To prevent skill shortages in hospitality industries, there is need for training needs assessment in the work place. Training needs assessment refers to the organizational process of collecting and analyzing data that supports decision making about what type of training and the time of training which is the best option to improve individuals, define who should be trained and exactly what content (Blain & Lashley, 2014). Lack of in-service training has led to the deplorable state of the hospitality industry in many areas in Nigeria and this includes Nsukka. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of information in this regard as little to no evidences exist of the in-service training needs of hospitality industry staff in the area. This is a gap which this study sought to bridge.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the in-service training needs of staff in hospitality industry in Nsukka. Specifically, the study determines the in-service training needs of hospitality staff in Nsukka in the following areas;

1. food and beverages
2. lodging
3. recreational
4. travel and tourism

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

What are the in-service training needs of staff of the hospitality industry in Nsukka:

1. food and beverages?
2. lodging?
3. recreational?
4. travel and tourism?

Methodology

Design of the Study: The study adopted a survey research design.

Area of the Study: The area of the study was Nsukka local government area, Enugu State. Nsukka is a town located in Enugu State, South-Eastern Nigeria. It is the location of university of Nigeria. There are many restaurants, hotels and recreational centers which are part of the hospitality industry. The area was chosen due to lack of in-service training programmes for hospitality industry in the local government area.

Population for the Study: The population for the study was made of 265 persons. These included 82 staff in food/beverage (32 males and 50 females), 102 staff in lodging section (40 males and 62 females), 21 staff (18 males and 3 females) in recreation and, 60 staff in travel/tourism section (59 males and 1 female). The age bracket of staff is between 23 -55 years. Highest educational qualification is first university degree certificate mainly for managers, while other categories of staff had senior secondary school (SSS) certificate and diploma/National certificate of Education (NCE). The entire population was studied due to the manageable size of the population.

In total, managers were 29 in number and 236 other staff which sum up to 265 as a population. Numbers per sections of industry include: 10 of food and beverage; 10 of lodging, 4 of recreational, and 5 of travel sections, all within Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State.

Instrument for Data Collection: A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The instrument was divided into two major parts: I and II. Part I obtained information on demographic data of the respondents, while part II was further sub-divided into clusters A, B, C and D based on the specific purposes. Clusters A - D have response options divided into 2 parts of four columns each. The first four columns contained the "importance" option which had four response options of HI - Highly Important; AI - Averagely Important; SI - Slightly Important and NI - Not Important with values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The "Needed" section solicited information from hospitality on the training needs of hospitality industry staff to ensure customer satisfaction. The last four columns contained the "Performance" option which indicated the level to which the hospitality industry staff could perform the training activities and had response options of High Performance (HP), Moderately Performance (MP), Slight Performance (SP) and No Performance (NP) with values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The "performance" section would be filled by the other hospitality industry workers besides the managers. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three university experts in Hospitality management education. A

reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained.

Data Collection Technique: A total of 265 copies of the questionnaire was administered by personal contact to respondents with the help of four trained research assistants. Out of the 265 copies of questionnaire distributed, 197 copies were retrieved. These included, 61 food and beverage staff, 75 lodging staff, 15 recreation staff and 46 travel staff. These yielded a return rate of 74 percent.

Data Analysis Technique: Data were analysed using weighted mean and improvement need index as developed by Olaitan and Ndomi (2000). Firstly, to determine the training needs of restaurant staff, the weighted mean of each item under the "Important skill" option (\bar{X}_1) was calculated. Secondly, the weighted mean of each item under the "Performance" option (\bar{X}_2) was calculated. Thirdly, the difference

between the two weighted means of each item ($\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2$) was also calculated. In interpreting the results, when the difference is zero (0) for each item, there was no need for in-service training because the level at which the item was needed as indicated by the weighted mean was equal to the level at which the hospitality industry staff could perform the particular task. Where the difference is positive (+) for any item, it indicated that there was need for in-service training because the level at which that item was needed was higher than the level the hospitality industry staff could perform the activity. Where the difference is negative (-) for any item, there was no need for in-service training because the level at which that item was needed was lower than the level the hospitality industry staff could perform the activity.

Results

Table 1: Mean Responses on In- Service Training (skills) Needs of Food and Beverage Sector Staff

S/N	Food and Beverage Sector Skills	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_3	R
	Ability to:				
1	convey the exact choice of customer to the kitchen department	3.87	3.91	-0.04	ITNN
2	anticipate guest wants and needs so as to provide service	3.51	3.68	-0.17	ITNN
3	set up the dining room in time	3.64	3.49	0.15	ITN
4	make inventory tracking and stock rotation	3.80	2.51	-0.14	ITNN
5	develop Empathy and active listening skills	3.91	3.27	0.64	ITN
6	generate an attitude of trust among co-workers	3.79	3.07	0.72	ITN
7	handle complaints and needs professionally	3.53	2.08	1.45	ITN
8	develop courtesy and positive attitudes while interacting with guests.	3.50	3.85	-0.35	ITNN
9	handle cash and credit transaction	3.88	3.37	0.51	ITN
10	perform improved serving techniques such as beverage presentation to enhance dining experience.	3.76	3.91	-0.15	ITNN
11	develop skill in wine tasting, pairing suggestions and beverage service protocols	3.78	3.01	0.77	ITN
12	take orders and deliver food on time	3.63	3.55	0.08	ITN

Table 1 continued

13	process payment without compromising accuracy or	3.95	2.65	1.30	ITN
14	quality	3.94	2.64	1.29	ITN
15	plan menu and pricing	3.95	2.65	1.30	ITN
16	Serve nutritional composition of various foods	3.54	2.07	1.47	ITN
	Provide preferred orders to customers				

N (Population) = 82; \bar{X}_1 = Mean of important skills Segment filled by restaurant managers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Performance segment filled by other restaurant workers; $\bar{X}_3 = (\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2)$ the Performance Gap; ITN = In-service Training Needed; ITNN = In-service Training Not Needed, R = Remark.

Table 1 reveals that 11 out of 16 items or areas had performance gap values ranged from 0.08 to 1.47 and were positive. This is indicating that the food and beverage staff need in-service training in those 11 areas or items. The remaining five items had negative and zero performance gaps of -0.04, -0.17, -0.14, -0.35 and -0.15 indicating that the food and beverage do not need in-service training in those items.

Table 2: Mean Responses on In-Service Training Needs of Lodging Sector Staff

S/N	Lodging Sector Skills	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_3	R
	Ability to:				
1	groom and make professional image standards	3.66	3.66	0.00	ITNN
2	observe guest services standard	3.97	3.18	0.79	ITN
3	Show respect to every customer including the naughty ones	3.53	3.59	-0.06	ITNN
4	manage business ethics	3.63	3.27	0.36	ITN
5	make bed, handle luggage and serve the table effectively.	3.79	3.07	0.72	ITN
6	organize task efficiently and carry them out without delay.	3.87	2.85	1.02	ITN
7	handle cash and credit transaction.	3.88	3.37	0.51	ITN
8	maintain physical wellbeing through stretching exercise and proper lifting techniques.	3.26	3.27	-0.01	ITNN
9	work as part of a team	3.16	2.30	0.86	ITN
10	listen, verbal and written communication skills	3.84	3.00	0.84	ITN
11	project a professional image	3.72	3.05	0.67	ITN
12	empathize with the guest experience	3.73	2.65	1.08	ITN
13	develop stress management	3.82	3.08	1.00	ITN
14	use card to open hotel door	3.14	2.29	0.85	ITN
15	interact with customers	3.26	3.28	-0.02	ITNN
16	operate lifters to check to different rooms	3.24	3.25	-0.01	ITNN
17	use automatic washing machine	3.83	2.99	0.84	ITN
18	use new gadgets	3.16	2.30	0.86	ITN

Key: N (Population) = 102; \bar{X}_1 = Mean of Important skills Segment filled by hotel managers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Performance segment filled by other hotel workers; $\bar{X}_3 = (\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2)$ the Performance Gap; ITN = In-service Training Needed; ITNN = In-service Training Not Needed; R = Remark.

Table 2 reveals that 13 out of 18 items had performance gap values ranged from 0.36 to 1.08 and were positive. This an indication that the lodging staff need in-service training in those 13

areas/items. The remaining five items had negative and zero performance gaps of 0.00, -0.06, -0.01, -0.02, and -0.01 indicating that the lodging staff do not need in-service training in those items.

Table 3: Mean Responses on In- Service Training Needs of Recreational Sector Staff

S/N	Recreational Sector Skill	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_3	R
Ability to:					
1	provide and organize recreational events like sports and outdoor excursion event.	3.72	3.58	0.14	ITN
2	identify potential risks related with recreational activities.	3.17	2.18	0.99	ITN
3	implement safety protocols and how to respond to emergencies.	3.78	2.49	1.29	ITN
4	promote environmental sustainability like waste reduction and energy conservation.	3.06	2.27	0.79	ITN
5	show empathy and active listening skills.	3.87	3.07	0.80	ITN
6	have communication skills and ability to maintain good rapport with participants.	3.30	1.85	1.45	ITN
7	develop customer-centered mindset like friendliness and Hospitality.	3.76	3.27	0.49	ITN
8	observe teamwork, cooperation and maximum Support	3.24	2.30	0.94	ITN
9	develop conflict management	2.73	2.20	0.36	ITN
10	handle first aid treatment and emergency responses.	3.61	3.20	0.41	ITN
11	operate recreational equipment and facilities.	2.15	1.66	1.49	ITN
12	lead and facilitate different recreational activities.	3.73	2.65	1.08	ITN
13	maintain and store recreational equipment	2.92	2.43	1.00	ITN

Key: N(Population) = 21; \bar{X}_1 = Mean of Important Skills Segment filled by recreation centre managers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Performance segment filled by other recreation centre workers; ; \bar{X}_3 = ($\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2$) the Performance Gap; ITN = In-service Training Needed; ITNN = In-service Training Not Needed, R = Remark.

Table 3 reveals that all 13 items had performance gap values ranged from 0.14 to 1.49 and were positive. This

implies that the recreation staff need in-service training in all the 13 areas / items in the Table.

Table 4: Mean Responses on In- Service Training Needs of Travel and Tourism Sector Staff

S/N	Travel and Tourism Skills	\bar{X}_1	\bar{X}_2	\bar{X}_3	R
Ability to:					
1	understand local service attractions, historical sites and cultural landmarks.	3.97	3.80	0.17	ITN
2	understand logistical aspect of traveling like transport options and accommodation booking,	3.95	3.18	0.77	ITN
3	understand different cultures and their etiquettes.	3.74	2.49	1.25	ITN

Table 4 continued

4	understand laws and regulations governing traveling and tourisms activities.	3.84	3.27	0.57	ITN
5	understand social media engagement	2.42	3.21	1.08	ITN
6	develop friendship with passengers	3.30	2.07	1.23	ITN
7	show good communications and language proficiency	3.75	2.85	0.90	ITN
8	observe good cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.	3.75	2.27	1.48	ITN
9	develop stress management skills	2.90	1.90	2.23	ITN
10	lead tours and manage groups dynamics.	3.38	2.10	1.28	ITN
11	deliver informative commentary.	3.79	3.00	0.79	ITN
12	read map efficiently	3.17	2.81	0.36	ITN
13	handle online bookings and reservation software	2.66	3.21	-0.21	ITNN

Key: N (Population) = 60; \bar{X}_1 = Mean of Important skills Segment filled by car park managers; \bar{X}_2 = Mean of Performance segment filled by other car park drivers; $\bar{X}_3 = (\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2)$ the Performance Gap; ITN = In-service Training Needed; ITNN = In-service Training Not Needed; R = Remark.

Table 4 reveals that 12 out of 13 items had performance gap values ranged from 0.17 to 1.48 and were positive. This indicates that the travel staff needs in-service training in 12 items/areas in the Table. The remaining one item had negative performance gap of - 0.21 indicating that travel and tourism staff do not need in-service training in the item.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed food and beverage sector staff in the hospitality industry in the area of the study need in-service training in 11 out of the 16 items/areas identified in Table 1. The findings are in line with Milman and Ricci (2014) who found out that restaurant staff requires knowledge on how to set up the dining room in time. The findings are also in agreement with Kerry (2017) who found out that the in-service skill training needs of restaurant staff include; ability to develop empathy and active listening skills, ability to handle complaints and skills in

anticipating guests wants and needs. The findings are in line with Popova (2018) that staff should have dining experience which entails setting up the dining room in time for customer satisfaction. The findings are also in agreement with Eze (2014) who found out that restaurant staff require knowledge of various foods nutritional composition and knowledge of basic terminologies used in the food industry. Hence, it is deduced that the identified items are the in-service training needs of food and beverage staff in Nsukka.

The findings also reveal that the lodging sector staff need in-service training in 13 out of the 18 areas identified in Table 2. Deficiency in these areas could be the reason for low customer satisfaction among lodging staff. The findings are consistent with those of Sommerville (2019) who found out that a major attitude required by hotel staff is training in taking personal pride in satisfying the needs of others and preference in helping others before

satisfying the needs of self. The findings support Tesone *et al* (2012) who found that managing stress improves work satisfaction. For an industry to excel and attract customers, staff needs to be trained on attitude to manage stress. Furthermore, the findings are with Subbarao (2018) who found out that the in-service training needs of hotel staff includes; Training in taking personal pride in satisfying the needs of others, attitude needed to work as part of a team over doing individualized work and training to ensure preference for challenging work over regimented work.

The findings of the study further reveal that the recreation staff in the hospitality industry need in-service training in all the 13 areas/items identifies in Table 3. The findings are in line with those of Schulz (2018) who found out that recreation staff need training in communication skills, flexibility, leadership, physical strength, ability to identify recreational risks, and the ability to ensure the safety of participants and conflict management. The findings are in line with Batinic (2013), business that provide series of activities for rest, relaxation and enjoyment in order to refresh a person's body and mind is very important. Recreational sector should provide a comfortable recreational event which will assist the customers to refresh one's body and mind. The findings are also supported by Okonkwo (2021) who found out that the areas where recreation staff need to be trained are skills in; adjusting actions in relation to others' actions, managing one's own time and having a good communication skill.

The findings in addition reveal that travel and tourism section staff need in-service training in 12 out of the 13 items/areas in the Table. The findings are consistent with those of Gary (2016) who found out that travel staff need language skills, culturally sensitive and logical aspect of traveling. The findings support Medlik (2013) who stated that tourism is travelling for pleasure which is away from home. Staff in travelling sector should realize and develop friendship with customers in order to attract patronage. The findings are also in agreement with Cole (2017) who found out that knowledge of global culture is required and that staff of tourism/travel industries need to be skilled.

Eze (2014) reported that although Nsukka has modern hotels in terms of infrastructure, the customer service in many of such hotels are poor leading to reduction in customers and consequently low profit. The author further opined that overtime, the low rate of income can lead to sacking of hotel staff and poor maintenance of hotel facilities. Furthermore, Adaeze (2017) found out that most times, restaurants are not kept in neat and good condition by staff which pushes some customers away. The consequences of poor service delivery to customers include reduction in income generated by hospitality industry, reduced income for hotel and restaurant owners as well as laying off workers to cut cost (Popova, 2018). To avoid this, there is need to address the root cause of the problem which is poor customer service. Poor customer service can be rectified through in-service training of hospitality industry staff. This is sad

considering the potentials that the hospitality industry has for individuals and as a nation. Akani (2014) reported that the hospitality industry has the potential to boost the economy of the state and promote social integration of people across the world if well harnessed but is currently been hampered by poor training of hospitality industry staff. Having seen that the hospitality industry has a huge potential in boosting economy and encouraging social integration, it becomes necessary to find a solution to the issue of poor training of hospitality industry staff which has continuously hindered the sector. This can be achieved through in-service training of hospitality industry staff.

Conclusion

The study was carried out to identify the in-service training needs of staff in the hospitality industry in Nsukka. The in-service training needs of restaurant staff in food and beverage sector, lodging sector, recreation sector as well as the travel industry were identified. Identification of the in-service training needs of hospitality industry staff is important to ensure customer satisfaction which would lead to higher revenues for the hospitality industry. If stakeholders in the hospitality industry carry out training for their staff in these areas. This could result in enhancement of the hospitality industry in terms of customer satisfaction and increased revenue.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. restaurant owners should provide opportunities for in-service training

of their staff in areas where they are deficient.

2. relevant research institutions should encourage their staff to carry out research in ways of improving the in-service training requirements for staff in hospitality industry.
3. the staff of the hospitality industry should source for opportunities for self-development in their skills.

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