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Humanising Leadership- The Effect Of Business Soft Skills On Service Delivery In The Hospitality Industry In Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstact:The pace of change has changed tremendously as the business world becomes global. Since the dollarization of the Zimbabwean economy in 2009, the service organisations have been facing challenges in terms of managing fluctuating demand. In particular, many companies in the hospitality industry were still using a "hit and miss" approach to handle their service. As such, business soft skills have become indispensable in the hospitality industry in the enhancement of service delivery. The study, therefore sought to examine the effect of business soft skills on service delivery in the hospitality industry in Harare. Specifically, the research sought to establish the knowledge levels of business soft skills in the hospitality industry; establish the impact of training on business professional skills in the hospitality industry on employee service delivery and identify the extent to which business soft skills have enhanced service delivery. A survey research design was adopted and survey questionnaires were sent to respondents who are implicitly and explicitly involved in business soft skills activities. The study's sample size comprised of 150 part time and permanent employees from selected hospitality companies. The research questionnaires were tested for reliability and validity through a pilot test. All the collected data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) version 20.0. The findings revealed that soft skills such as interpersonal skills, communication skills, strong work ethic and team work skills were deficient. In addition, respondents also showed difficulties in leadership and decision making skills. The findings revealed that business soft skills were low among all the types of employees. The findings also revealed that companies do have challenges with soft skills training. The study concluded that soft skills are of paramount importance in meeting customer needs. Thus, soft skills are important in showcasing hard skills. The study recommends future research to focus on the demand side of the skills equation by looking on how the designs of organisations and jobs do impact skill requirements and performance in the hospitality service sector.

Introduction

The hospitality industry faces a myriad of pressing labour force challenges, especially shortage of workers skilled for effective business outcomes specifically soft skills. Many authors, including Cardy and Selvarajan (2006); Poretla and Thanassoulis (2005) and Ally and Cleveland-Innes, (2008), have pointed fingers to the primary and secondary institutions for dismally failing to aptly prepare future employees with these skills. Although these skills have been largely hidden and veiled in obscurity in the education curriculum, the business soft skills have become indispensable in today's job market. With international business becoming highly competitive, business soft skills have become a key strategy not only to lower the cost of human capital but also improve the growth of service organisations (Ibrahimkhan, 2006). Current trends in human resources management place emphasis on the development and application of professional business soft skills especially in improving job performance and this in turn has heightened organisational competitiveness (Cardy and Selvarajan, 2006).

In the hospitality industry, the success of a service provider depends on the high service delivery relationship with customers and this determines customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Panda 2003). Research by Poretla and Thanassoulis (2005) shows that business soft skills influence organisational outcomes crush as increasing sales profit and market share, enhanced corporate image and promote customer loyalty. Furthermore, Newman (2008) and Caruana (2002) concur that employee business soft skills are related to customer loyalty through repurchase. Thus, delivering quality service through professional business soft skills to customers is a must for success and survival in today's competitive business environment.

The hospitality sector in Zimbabwe has failed to bounce back after the dollarisation of the economy in 2009 in line with the economy as a whole (Bloch, 2010). Most companies in the hospitality industry had been facing challenges in terms of managing fluctuating demand. Indeed, Kanyenze (2010) elucidates that after dollarisation the hotel companies faced the challenge of rebuilding their clientele base, through a number of strategies including branding, product differentiation,

competitiveness and brand recognition for business service delivery success. Most customers have not been satisfied with the performance of employees especially their professional knowledge, emotional stability handling of pressure and problem solving. As a result employers had to retrain and develop the skills (Livingstone and Hart, 2008). In particular, the organisations faced the loss of clients, image damage and reputational risks. According to Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (2009) many employees in the hotel industry did not have customer service orientation which may point to the reason for the industry's struggles despite the rebound in other sectors of the Zimbabwean economy over the same period.

The unfortunate part was that most hotel companies were still using a trial and error or "hit and miss" approach to handle their service business thereby relegating service delivery strategic objectives to the periphery. That led to diverse implications for many hotels such as non-value adding processes, the inefficient use of resources and in the long run customer dissatisfaction. Consequently, there had been poor customer service delivery as the quality of service delivered by the companies was low. Indeed, many hotels faced the challenges of greater market satisfaction in order to cultivate customer loyalty (Lam and Bojei, 2007). Driven by intense competition, liquidity recessionary pressures to control costs and customer demands for improved quality, the hotels needed to adopt one or more professional business soft skills initiatives (Hanke, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Breiter and Clements (1996) assert that professional business soft skills are the most critical competency deserving a high level of attention in the hospitality industry for the 21st century. Zimbabwe is one of the tourists' spots in Africa and attracts both foreign and domestic tourists. However, there is the need to understand client expectations and perceptions about the quality of hospitality in the sector. The changes in the business environment, changes in consumer education and knowledge, the antecedents of consumer choices and preferences require an empirical pragmatic assessment of the need for business soft skills (Dadzie and Boachie-Mensah, 2011). Hotels have been experiencing loss of business largely due to tight competition on the market. Paradoxically, most of the hotels and

resturants have not been showing the service delivery features such as efficiency and reliability, as they continued to lose their market share.

Ultimately, a significant number of employees have been retrenched owing to loss of business. In light of the above, most hotels have not explored the role of business professional soft skills on organisational performance. Thus, the study sought to investigate and examine the relevance of soft skills within competency requirements of employees in the hotel industry. One of the important questions raised in this study is: Does soft skills processes orientation directly impact on service delivery? For service firms we expect this to be the case. According to Oliver and Swan (2000), it costs 5 times to attract new customers than keeping existing ones. Thus, developing employee business soft skills becomes central to maintaining excellent service delivery in the fierce marketplace. Consequently, it is necessary to re-evaluate what set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that an employee needs in order to succeed in the rapidly changing global economy. Considering the importance of business soft skills in the hospitality labour market the main concern was the repercussions of soft skills on business performance. The study, therefore sought to examine the effect of business soft skills on service delivery in the hospitality industry in Harare. Specifically, the research sought to establish the knowledge levels of business soft skills in the hospitality industry; establish the impact of training on business professional skills in the hospitality industry on employee service delivery and identify the extent to which business soft skills have enhanced service delivery.

Literature Review

With globalisation and competitiveness becoming the benchmark of any multinational organisation, it has becomes paramount for employees to be equipped with good business soft skills. A litany of literature emphasise the dichotomy between soft and hard skills. Indeed, many studies propose a complementary relationship between soft and hard skills in effective job performance (Lin, 2005). Many employers now not only consider employee skills and knowledge but also pay much attention to their soft skills such as personal qualities.

The term “soft skills” is a catch all phrase that is often used to define employees’ non

technical abilities. Business soft skills are broadly defined as a set of non technical, professional abilities such as communication, interpersonal and customer service skills as well as personal traits such as integrity, and responsibility (Prinianaki, 2004). Some attributes such as being able to solve problems, working well in a team environment and motivating others are some of the characteristics that are usually grouped into this category. In the unique context of the hospitality industry, especially frontline staffs, soft skills are usually the foundation of excellence customer service (Lefever and Withiam, 2005).

The soft skills include skills associated with the behaviour necessary for necessary interpersonal interaction (Kemper, 1999). As asserted by Byham and Moyer (2005), business soft skills are mainly perceptual or attitudinal and reactionary. Lawrence (2002) also believes that business soft skills are needed as employability skills because of their problem solving, creativity, intuition, and communication skills. Based on the above statement Caudron (1999) and Ganzel (2001) concur that business soft skills are more difficult to learn than hard skills.

According to Burns (1997,) soft skills are much more important than hard skills in the provision of hospitality since emotional demands are made of employees to constantly be in positive, joyful and playful mood. Stewart (2004) points out that business soft skill are largely concerned with attitudinal and emotional aspects. Soft skills are also important in meeting people's needs so that they can feel good about going forward and meeting the business metrics. Furthermore, the soft skills are critical in the leveraging of company in meeting organisational goals, objectives and core strategies competition (Crouch *et al.* 1999).Thus, much of the discussion on soft skills are largely concerned with ensuring employees are responsive, courteous, and understanding with customers.

On the other hand, Spencer and Spencer (2003) define hard skills as primarily cognitive in nature and usually include professional knowledge and task oriented skills. Similarly, Ashbaugh (2003) explains that hard skills include oriented skills such as basic prerequisites for a job in which the individual physically interacted with technology during the production of material and tangible products. In addition, hard skills require an intellectual thought process which factors in a

person's intelligent quotient (Rainsbury etal, 2002). Costin (2002) identifies the components of hard skills as tool use, formulae use and fitness. Furthermore, hard skills can be taught but soft skills have a natural flair for things like exemplary customer care, a team oriented outlook and effective communication skills. Thus, some companies are now hiring the attitude rather than focusing on work experience. For the hotel industry, the hospitality industry employees working in guest facing roles, business soft skills are the nucleus of excellent customer service.

The importance of soft skills has been documented by many studies. For instance, Breiter and Clements (2006) found that leadership competency is the most important element in the hospitality management. Other studies such as Andelt, Barrett, and Bosshamer (1997) and Arnaldo (1981) have indicated the importance of leadership skills in hospitality management functions. Many studies have emphasised the importance of business soft skills when discussing job competency. Scholars such as Spencer and Spencer (2003) believe that high quality performance is not only determined by better technical skills but also by manifestation of the underlying characteristics. Similarly, Buhler (2001) and Ganzel (2001) believe that business soft skills are the key in determining the actual tasks being performed because of its ability to lead to adapt to challenges in the workplace. Brown (2003) and Byham and Moyer (2005) agree that knowledge and skills comprise visible soft skills competency. Brown (2003) also included creativity and interpersonal skills in a visible competency.

In countries such as India business soft skills are important since the education system does not include personality development in its stream of academic education (Rimmington, 1999). This is also true in Malaysia which is seen as a prominent hub for outsourcing manpower. Although the industry jobs involve some level of technical skills authors such as Thacker and Yost (2002) regard the technical aspect as of secondary importance. This is corroborated by Prinianaki (2004) who elucidates that it is business soft skills which count when it comes to the growing of the organisation. Thus, companies are now forced to invest more and more on soft skills training in order to groom their employees to present themselves in a better manner and improve their performance. Studies in Thailand revealed that most organisations can't do without business skills and values. In fact

profits would come out from higher levels of training as higher skills would increase levels of job satisfaction and commitment and better communications (Keep and Mayhew, 2004).

Curtis and McKenzie (2005 suggest eight primary business soft skills that work together with personal attributes and these include loyalty, commitment, honesty, personal presentation, integrity, enthusiasm, reliability and positive self esteem. Using empirical evidence from Thailand, Siriwaiprapan (2000) found five common domains of employee business soft skills required by human resources practitioners and these include organisational competency, social competency, cognitive competency, self competency, and job competency. Along the same line of argument Wood and Payne (1998) believe that communication, flexibility, achievement orientation, leadership, planning skills, teamwork, relationship building and organisational skills are equally important. For Siriwaiprapan (2000) business soft skills such as analytical thinking and problem solving are paramount in solving contingencies when jobs change unpredictably. Thus, with the business environment becoming knowledge oriented, jobs now require employees who can think, make decisions, conceptualise, analyse and resolve problems (Velde, 2004). Thus, many service organisations have become proponents of building strong character through the implementation business of business soft skills.

More so, Hawkins and Winter (2006) believe that business soft skills stand as an important interface for workers to become experts. However, despite the demand for soft skills, there still remain a persisting gap in knowledge and training. This is because higher education has been accused of largely insisting on core skills despite the lack of personnel with transferable skills (Binks, 1996). In addition, Okumuş and Yağcı (2005) argue that the lack of qualified staff in hotels and restaurants has been due to improperly designed curricula, limited practical training opportunities for employees and the difficulty in keeping qualified staff. Raybould and Wilkins (2005) posit that there have been changes in the hospitality industry from technical skills to more personal and social ones. As noted by According to Chung (2003) and Raybould and Wilkins (2005), workers in the hotel industry do have insufficient knowledge about soft skills because what they got from the colleges and universities does not correspond to their needs. Amongst

the most required skills for employees include communication with guests, creativity in particular situations (Chung, 2001). Business soft skills such as adaptability, creativity and critical thinking are needed so much for bridging the gap between good and great employees as well as good and great organisations. Given the value organisations place on soft skills components like communication, leadership and collaboration are essential for organisations to regularly assess their soft skills programs.

Business soft skills are central to business performance in the service sector and to employee ability to succeed and advance in the workplace. Many service companies acknowledge the importance of investing in human capital. Thus, there is the need for companies, employees and job seekers to further productivity and growth and create a favourable business environment. For companies in the service sector, business performance is directly associated to human capital capabilities particularly interpersonal and customer service capabilities. As noted by Robles, there is a general consensus that business soft skills are a powerful indicator of long term success. According to Wilhelm (2004), technical knowledge is much less of a predictor of job performance. Another study by John (2009) indicated that hard skills contribute only 15% to one's success whereas 85% of the success is due to soft skills. According to Watts and Watts, (2008), the retail and hospitality industry consistently need communication, and interpersonal skills as fundamental requirements. Management of these industries explain that integrity and integrity underpin their customer service philosophy and thus traits are important to employee success. Even at individual level Lafer (2004) believes that there is a positive link between soft skills and performance with a high degree of confidence. Although the term business soft skills cover many qualities that are so many and varied it is tempting to attribute everything to them. According to Hamermesh and Biddle (2004) there is also apparently a pay per premium available for people who are more beautiful in soft skills than the average.

There are many competency models which have been proposed according to the perspectives in different fields. These models have been implemented widely in many countries including New Zealand, United Kingdom and Australia (Tien, Ven and Chou, 2003). The most popular model is the one

proposed by Soencer (1993) known as the iceberg model. The model has the underlying characteristics which causes behaviour and performance. The most common competency model is the iceberg model proposes by Velde (2004). The iceberg model is built on motives, traits, self concept, skills and knowledge. The iceberg model is summarised below:

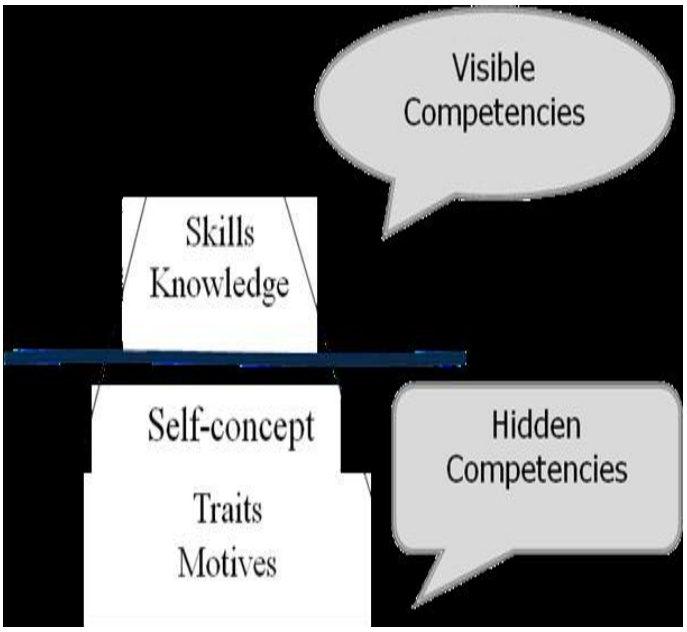


Figure 1. The iceberg model by Velde (2004).

Scholars such as Hunt and Baruch (2003) emphases the importance of soft skills that employers do value instead of intellectual skills. Thus, employee soft skills have become assets that are valuable throughout business organisation lifetime. In particular, soft skills are required in today's cutthroat competition. Although regarded as an indispensable requirement for hiring and job performance many employees do lack the basic soft skills. As noted by Schulz (2008), 49% of human resources mangers indicate that overall decline in workforce readiness of employees has a major impact of the success of the business. Thus, Overtoom (2003) recommend that 40% of the hospitality curricula should be soft skills. New employees usually do lack communication skills and struggle with time management skills regardless of their level of education or position. It is no exaggeration that there is a "trickledown" effect of the advantages offered by soft skills to those lower down the labour market hierarchy. In particular, workers with high levels of technical skills benefit from soft skills (Bolton 2004). Petrs and Austin (2005) point out that there is a positive relationship soft skills and firm performance. This is supported by studies by Korczynski (2001) in Canadian hotels where it was found that business soft skills would lead to a win-win situation for both the company and the customers. The argument is that people who make the difference and exemplary service and this result in business.

Methodology, Target population and instrumentation

The study adopted a survey research design for collection of data from selected hotels and restaurants companies in Harare. Survey questionnaires were distributed to employees in the hospitality industry. The questionnaires were administered on male and female employees on ten companies. The instruments for the data collection were soft skills traits questionnaires, annual performance evaluation forms and soft skill assessment scale (Majid and Mulia, 2011). The instruments used for data collection included a business soft skills traits questionnaire adopted from studies by Litecky etal., (2010) and Todd et al., (2005). The first section was designed to get demographic details of the respondents regarding their gender, age, marital status and academic qualifications. Second section of the questionnaire solicited information on communication skills, creative skills and problem solving skills, tem work skills. The questionnaire was constructed and subjected to content validation. Thus the questionnaire was administered to a sample of 10 employees and reliability of 0.78 was obtained using the Cronbach alpha coefficient. The questionnaires were developed and piloted in conjunction with human resources practitioners, training and development agencies and employees (Taylor et al., 2000). Descriptive analysis was carried out to get results of the demographic profile of the respondents by calculating their frequency and percentage distribution. The descriptive measures of mean and standard deviation were used to assess the distribution of responses against the items of the constructs under study. All analysis were done using SPSS version 20.0 for windows. Additionally, all the items were taken from the validated scales of Thom (2007) and Linh (2009) to ensure the reliability and validity of the research questionnaire.

Descriptive statistics

In the business soft skills blocks, respondents were requested to rank given items 1 to 5 where 1 was strongly disagree and 5 was strongly disagree. From the responses, means and standard deviations were calculated. As ranked by the respondents, item 4 “team work skills at work have effect on employees’ performance at work” scored the highest mean score of 4.79 and standard deviation of 0.508. The lowest mean score of 2.681 was against item 1 “All employees have effective communication skills” with a

standard deviation of 0.882. The second highest mean score of 4.32 was item 3: "Employees do have creative skills" with a standard deviation of 0.642. Generally, the responses had mean scores more than 3 and that implied that the score distributions were slanted towards agreement. Additionally, the responses of the participants were generally indistinct (0.598). The findings are tabulated below

Item	Description	Max.	min	Mean	Std deviation
1	All employees have effective communication skills	3.00	1.00	2.681	0.882
2	All employees have problem solving skills	4.00	1.00	3.578	0.113
3	Employees do have creative skills.	5.00	3.00	4.32	0.642
4	team work skills at work have effect on employees' performance at work	5.00	4.00	4.79	0.508
Overall Average		4.25	2.25	3.84	0.53625

Table 3 summarises the means and standard deviations of the responses against items for business soft skills diversity. According to the ratings by the respondents, item 1 and 3 had the highest mean scores of 3.788 and 2.967respectively. Thus, the statements that "Employees have good Listening Skills" and "Employees have passed Reading Skill Test" had most of the responses in the positive. The standard deviations of for item 1 of 0.41 and 0.694 meant that the responses were largely indistinct. Items 2 and 4 had responses which had mean scores of less than 3 which mean that most of the respondents generally disagreed. The findings are shown below:

Item	Description	Max.	Min.	Mean	Std deviation
	Employees have good Listening Skills	5.00	1.00	3.788	0.41

Employees do have good speaking Skills	4.00	1.00	2.870	1.33
Employees have passed Reading Skill Test	5.00	1.00	2.967	0.694
The employees do have professional Body Language	5.00	1.00	2.69	0.47
The employees do have aptitude tests.	4.00	1.00	2.56	0.32

The study also analysed whether employees do receive various training for soft skills at work. As rated by the respondent's item 1 "Product and process assessment tests are conducted regularly." had the highest mean score of 2.38 and a standard deviation of 0.63. This implies that the respondents generally disagreed that product and assessment tests are conducted regularly by the companies. In addition, items ,2 and 4 had mean scores which were less than 3 and that implies that the responses were in the negative and slanted towards disagreement. The findings are shown on the table below:

		Max.	**Min**	**Mean**	**Std deviation**
	Product and process assessment tests are conducted regularly.	3.00	1.00	2.38	0.63
	The organisation gives staff learning materials on soft skills for the organisation.	4.00	2.00	2.34	0.14
	Employees are equipped with necessary information and understanding of how to respond to a given situation in thoughts, words and deeds	4.00	2.00	3.67	0.51
	Assessment and certification of soft skills gives employees an edge over competition	3.00	1.00	2.79	2.

Findings and Discussion

The study examined the effect of business soft skills on service delivery on companies in the hospitality industry in Harare. A total of 150 respondents from 15 hotels and restaurants respondent to the survey. The following section is presented in two parts

namely demographic data of the respondents and the actual findings.

Demographic profile of the respondents

The diagram below illustrates the gender of the respondents who participated in the survey.

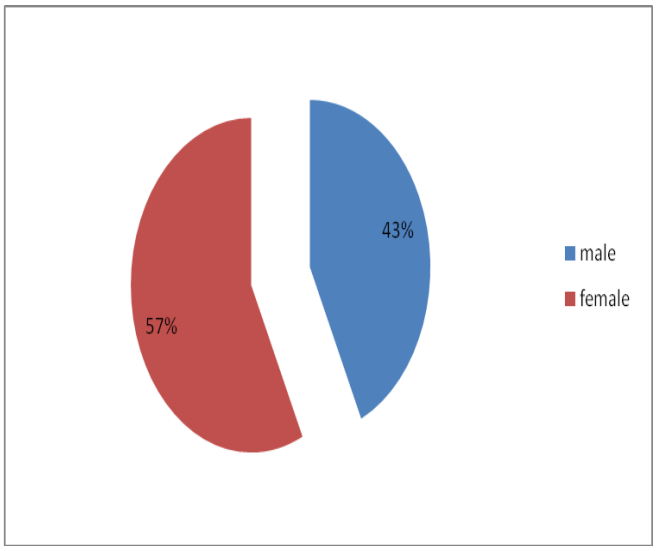
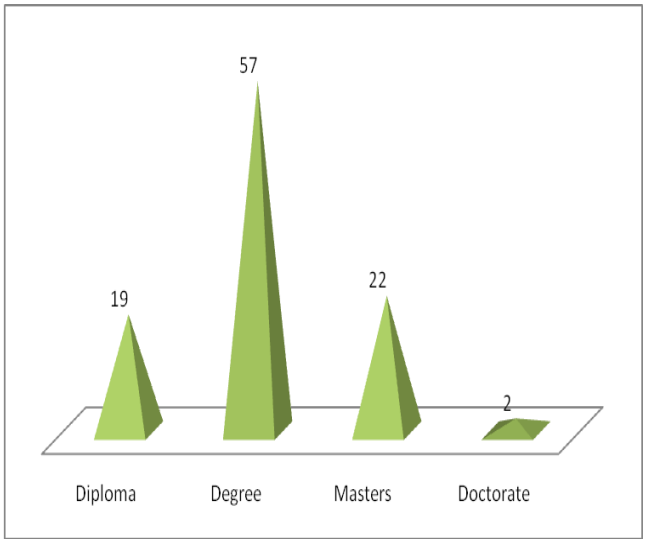


Figure 2. Gender of Respondents

As shown by figure 1, 57% of the respondents were females and 47% of them were males. The datum was considered statistically significant to the extent that it significantly confirmed the dominance of females in the hospitality sector. For instance, Bowora and Mpofu (2008), clearly concur that there is female dominance in most hospitality companies in Zimbabwean hospitality companies.

The composition of the distribution of respondents by educational qualifications revealed that 19% (28) of the respondents had diplomas, 57% (86) possessed undergraduate degrees, 22% (33) had masters degrees and only 2% (3) had doctorates. The findings are illustrated diagrammatically on figure 2 below:



From the above figure, it can be inferred that the majority of the respondents had at least a university degree. Indeed, more than 80% of the respondents had university degrees. In terms of positions in the organisation, table 1 below summarises the frequencies and percentage for both temporary and part time employees. According to the findings, 42% of the participants were fulltime employees and 58 % were part time employees. The findings are tabulated below:

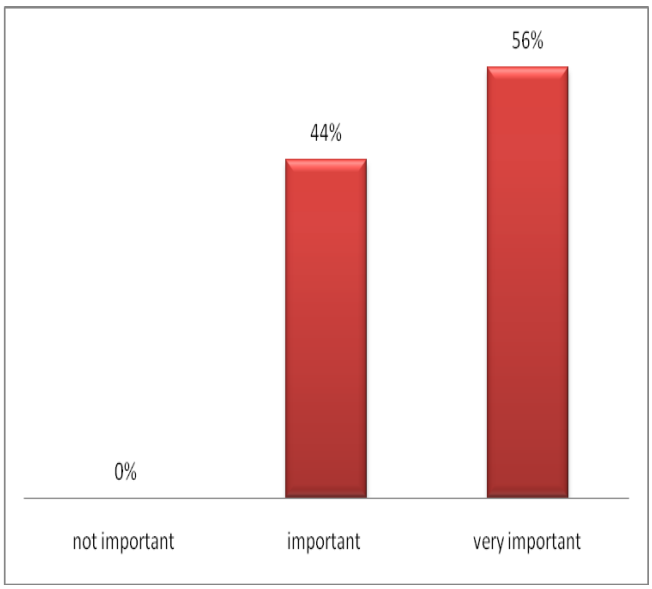
Table 1 position in the organisation

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Permanent employee	63	42
Part time employee	87	58

Total	**150**	**100**

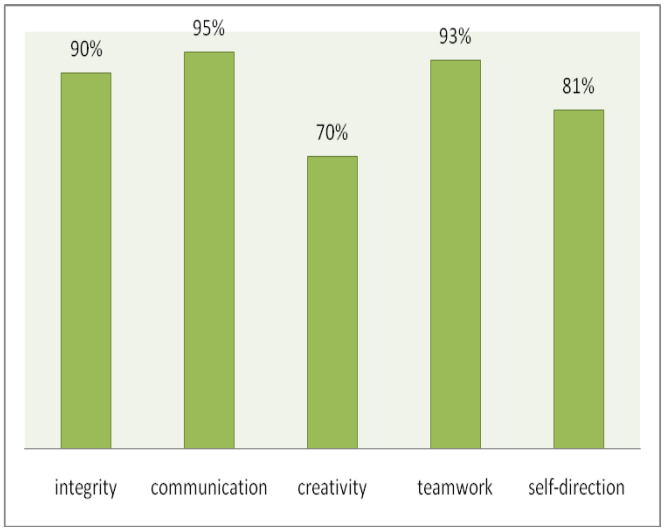
Research findings

The respondents were asked about the importance of business soft skills in the delivery of their day to day duties. According to the survey findings, 56% believed that business soft skills were very important in carrying out company goals and objectives and 44% of the participants believed that it was important. The findings are shown below:



From the above figure, it can be seen that professional business skills are paramount for the delivery of high quality service delivery in the hospitality industry. The findings supports meta analysis studies in Canada by Osterman's (2006) which revealed positive effects of business soft skills on service delivery in hotels and restaurants. Additionally, studies by Burks et al. (2009) also found that employees at large us trucking companies have a better ability to problem solve had a clear positive correlation to not only job retention, but also customer satisfaction and ultimately service delivery. Additionally, a survey on 2768 Dutch workers by Groot and Maassen van den Brink (2005) found a positive relationship between service delivery and business soft skills.

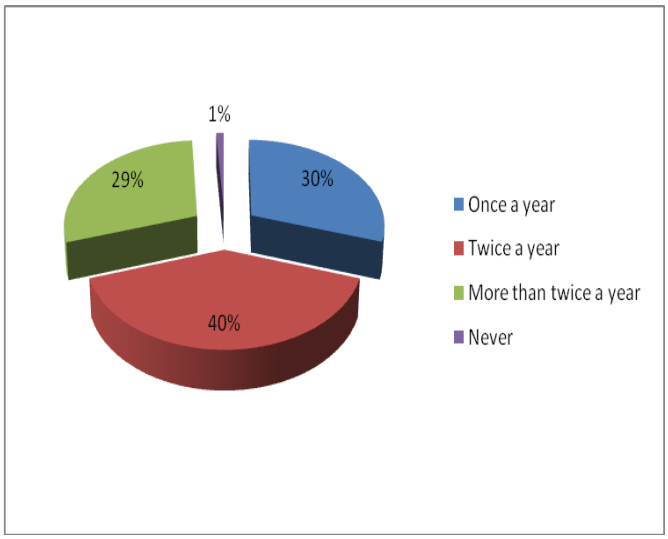
Regarding business soft skills which were considered more critical, the participants ranked communication, teamwork and integrity as the most important. However, self direction and creativity were viewed as the least critical for quality service delivery. The findings are illustrated below.



From the above figure, it can be gleaned that the skill of communication was the most important preferred soft skill for hotels and restaurants employees. This concurs with studies by Kay and Russette, (2000) and

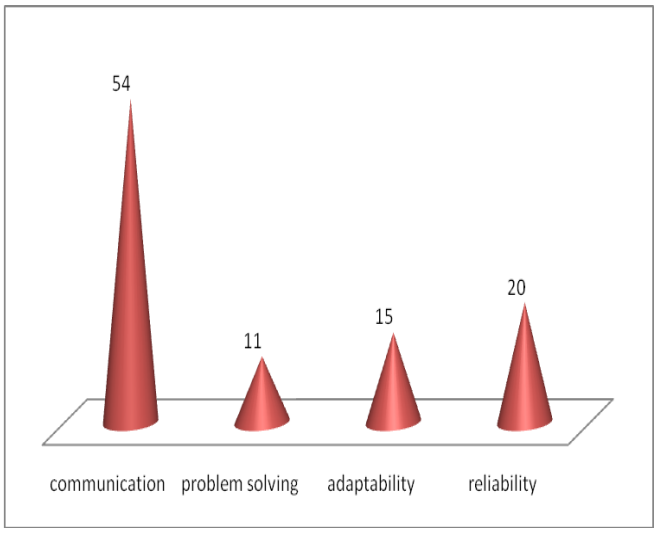
Chung-Herrera et al, (2003) which found that skills which include written, interpersonal and oral are vital for the hospitality and tourism industry. The findings also support the longitudinal study by Kuh etal (2010) in Canada which revealed that communication skills are better predictor of service delivery for restaurants. The second selected top business soft skills of teamwork was consistent with studies by Kay and Russette (2000) which revealed that teamwork and communication skills are competencies indispensable in both functional and management of services. The category integrity was also selected within the top five skills identified in the studies by Baum (2000). As elucidated by Baum (2000), employee integrity skills in the hospitality industry is very necessary.

Regarding training for soft business skills, 40% of the participants stated that it was twice a year, 29% stated that it was more twice a year. Additionally 30% of the respondents stated that business soft skills was done once a year and only 1% stated that it was never held. The findings are illustrated below



The above findings do reveal that the rate of training or most organisations was at most twice a year. This implies that training for soft skills is not done frequently by the organisations under study.

Regarding business soft skills lacking in most employees communication was undeniably the most common response with 54% of the respondents stating that the skill was lacking.



The findings revealed that the soft skill of communication was the most lacking for employees and this was followed by

reliability. However, this was in contrast with the findings in Turkish hotels which revealed that employers now need communication as the greatest important business soft skills. The World Bank (2008) also postulates that communications skills are increasingly in demand in the global labour market. The findings did reveal that adaptability is also a key component for workplace success in an economy that now demands flexibility and innovation instead of repetitive service tasks.

Conclusion

From the findings, it can be concluded that the hotel industry is experiencing a skills gap and the lack of experienced labour has created a vicious cycle in terms of quality. Despite, an improvement in the level of formal education, the industry still struggle with a poor image as an employer. The sector, is thus in need of strategic information in order to meet future challenges from competition on labour.

The findings revealed that communication is the most important skill necessary for hotel employees to do their jobs. In addition, interpersonal skills were viewed as equally important for employees to execute their job functions. The findings are supported by previous researches conducted by Connolly and McGing (2006) which revealed that business soft skills such as team working are more important than hard skills such as analytical skills.

The findings showed that business soft skills such as communication are perceived as important in the hotel industry so as to achieve greater service delivery. These are also more important than hard skills such as marketing, accounting and decision making. The participants confirmed that communication was significantly necessary to their performance as hotel employees. However, the skill was lacking in most employees who were surveyed.

Thus, business professional soft skills are a continuous journey application to business service delivery success.

Recommendations and areas for further research

Based on the findings there is the need for more business soft skills training particularly for part time employees. In particular, there is the need for continued dialogue between the hospitality industry and hospitality college educators.

Colleges and institutions which offer programmes for hospitality should raise awareness regarding the importance of business soft skills. An efficient way would be to include soft skills training into the teaching

of hard skills. It is paramount that universities and colleges design adequate curricular which involve soft skills training and development. Thus, the university and colleges should be central players in creating and offering scalable soft skills training solutions in partnership with the leaders in the hotel industry.

The survey findings also revealed that business professional soft skills do have a high positive impact on company service delivery. Thus, it is recommended that hotel companies must develop comprehensive training models so as to equip employees with these business professional soft skills. In particular, hotels and restaurants should deal with quality dimension issues covering tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and courtesy. The tangibles include appearance of the physical environment, including equipment, dress code of employees and cleanliness of the premises

Professional Business soft skills can be improved through e- learning, mentoring, alliances and experiential learning. Companies should give employees access to online business soft skills training and this would help in complementing their classroom based approaches. This can be full in house or fully outsourced business soft skills toolkit and this would help individuals in having a tremendous opportunity to become exceptionally productive and effective at workplace.

Management should encourage professional communication between part time and permanent communication. Additionally, there is the need to maintain a learning organisation. Management should also have in-house training for employees so that they speak with confidence, show ability to listen and provide concise to answers.

Coaching and mentoring could help people to develop a number of soft skills including listening and observing. good mentoring can also encourage attention to the issues of problem framing and setting and problem solving. Additionally, mentoring also facilitate a two way exchange of knowledge which cab be particularly useful for senior mentors.

The findings did reveal that business soft skills in the hospitality industry are low and thus employee training on skills acquisition is important. This could be achieved through embracing 360 degree assessment. The approach involves a comprehensive feedback from everyone who interacts with employees at work. As such, the feedback must be used to create an opportunity to think about employee competencies and achievements

ad identification of gaps, and to ensure that they are staying on track for doing what is important for the organisation.

The organisations should implement behavioural and professional development programs to foster the ongoing career growth and maturation of their employees. For instance, the companies may identify customer-focus, ethics, perseverance, creativity and problem solving as some key competencies they would like to build.

There may be scope for further research into whether or not business soft skills can be taught as a subject material in colleges and universities.

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