

## **Training Barriers in the Middle Eastern Hotel Industry: A Case Study in Saudi Hotels**

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### **Abstract**

Training in hotels was found to be useful for the development of the human resources through which hotels deliver services to their guests. Training barriers in hotels in Saudi Arabia have not been empirically explored, especially from the perspective of hotel training managers. The purpose of this study is to explore major barriers that training managers in Saudi Arabian hotels are facing and their impact on the training function in the hotels. The study is aimed at identifying causes of these barriers, and effects on the staff performance. A single embedded case study approach was used, which involved unstructured interviews with hotel training managers and document analysis. The case study was conducted in three Saudi Arabian five-star international chained hotels. All three hotels represented units of the single case study as they all belong to the same chain and following the same brand standards. After conducting and analyzing the interviews along with the documents, thirteen issues have been identified throughout all three units of the case study.

**Key Words:** Training, Human resources, Barriers, Middle East

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### **Introduction**

Training helps reduce employee turnover (Lashley, 2001); increase organizational commitment, job satisfaction and motivation (Sahinidis and Bouris, 2008); improve job and organizational performance, and profitability (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009). There is limited literature that explores hotel training obstacles in Saudi Arabia, especially from the perspective of hotel training managers. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to explore major barriers that training managers in Saudi Arabian hotels are facing and their impact on the training function in the hotels. The study is aimed at identifying causes of these barriers, and effects on the staff performance. In order to achieve the research aim, the study took the single embedded case study approach through the use of unstructured interviews with hotel training managers and document analysis. Three Saudi Arabian five-star international chained hotels were chosen for the case study. They all belong to the same chain and follow the same brand standards and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The study contributes to the literature and practice of hotel training. This is the first case study that covers hotel training in Saudi Arabian international chained hotels.

### **Literature Review**

The development of human resources in hotels is not only considered as a side of quality improvement but also as a way of increasing organizational efficiency, productivity, and profit (Juang et al., 2007). The training of employees at work became widely recognized as an important part of human resource management (Cappelli, 1999; Bartel, 2000; Lester, 2001; Oakland, 2003; Fortin and Parent, 2006; Rabemananjara and Parsley, 2006; Juang et al., 2007). Human resources management has shifted their views about training from a separate, stand-alone event to a fully integrated, strategic component of the organization. New training-related approaches, including action learning, just-in-time training, mentoring, coaching, organizational learning and managing skill portfolios are all currently being explored (Salas and Cannon-Bowers, 2001).

Training can be defined as the systematic approach to improving employees' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to improve individual, team, and organizational effectiveness (Goldstein & Ford 2002). This study focuses on training in the hotel industry based on the previous definition. The importance of training originates from several aspects. First, training improves job performance, which involves the skill level of the employee (Rabemananjara and Parsley, 2006). Second, training improves organizational performance, which involves effectiveness (i.e., employee involvement, human resource indicators, and quality), and profitability (i.e., sales volume, benefits before interest and taxes, and a ratio of benefit before taxes/sales) (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009). Third, training is a key method for promoting the working capabilities for better human resources function in organizations (Juang et al., 2007). Fourth, empirical studies found that training is significantly correlated with employees' commitment to their organizations, job satisfaction and motivation (Sahinidis and Bouris, 2008). Fifth, training helps to create and develop intellectual hotel properties (Bassi et al., 2002). Sixth, training was found to be a key catalyst that helps increase employee satisfaction, which in return help reduce employee turnover and consequently reduce the expenses of recruiting new job candidates (Lashley, 2001).

Training is, nowadays, facing challenging situations in all industries, particularly those depending heavily on the human factor (i.e. service industries). The employer's return on investment in training is believed to be much higher than

the records always show. Yet it is still unclearly seen to most employers (Bartel, 2000). The first barrier is that improved training comes at a cost and most employers only see this side of the training in their evaluation (Salas and Cannon-Bowers, 2001; Rabemananjara and Parsely, 2006). Managers are more concerned with the cost of training than the benefits that may return on their hotels. The organizational management perspective towards training should change from “expense” to “asset” (Parker et al., 1997). Bassi et al. (2002) have highlighted the fact that top levels of management may own the “asset” perspective towards training. However, middle management levels are yet to believe that training is worthwhile as they most likely are looking for short-term results. This challenging issue was mostly found in small and medium-sized organizations (Betcherman, et al., 1998). They identified cost as a major obstacle to training for small companies. They concluded that the average cost of training (per employee or person in training) is appreciably higher in small firms than in large firms. As a result, small firms favor on-the-job training because it is less structured and more accessible. This type of training does not incur the fixed costs associated with structured training (training materials, instructors’ salaries, etc.).

The second barrier highlighted was training methods. The traditional methods of training focus on verbal training of beginners by experienced employees. These methods are time-consuming and inefficient, therefore, especially for frequent employee turnover; instruction with experienced employees is hardly practical (Juang et al., 2007). Today training methods range from on-the-job training, classroom training, self-instruction through the audio-visual material, visits to other hotels, membership in professional associations, and computer-based learning. Empirical studies found several issues related to training methods; these issues were also related to the cost aspect of training (Pall and Robustelli, 2000). Online training systems have been introduced in the beginning of 2000s. Some have been designed and planned by individuals (Chen et al., 2007); others were developed by major hotel chains (i.e. Starwood, Hilton, Marriott, and Four seasons). These online training systems were developed to improve the employees of learning and knowledge acquisition easily. The issues highlighted in this aspect were, similarly, the increased costs of system planning, designing, and installing. In addition, it is believed that employees who are computer literate are unable to benefit from this kind of training.

Lack of information on training opportunities is also cited as a barrier to training for small businesses (e.g. training suppliers and programs available) (Rabemananjara and Parsely, 2006). It is found that hotel organizations tend to only pay for training that would not be of use to the employee if they moved to another employer. This would result in a sub-optimal level of training since most employees are likely to be unable to meet their other training needs (i.e. general skills training) without the assistance of their employer. This is due to either lack of time outside work, or money, or both. Hotel managers believe that a human asset can walk out the door at any time, which also creates some understandable reluctance to make significant investments in training (Bassi et al., 2002). In summary, funding is another training-related issue that is a hurdle to achieving training and business objectives.

## **Methodology**

The methodology is the strategy, plan of action, process, or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998). It is concerned with how we conceptualize, theorize and make abstractions as it is with the techniques or methods which we utilize to assemble and analyze information (Miller and Brewer, 2003). The purpose of the study is to explore major barriers that training managers in Saudi Arabian hotels are facing and their impact on the training function in the hotels. The study is aimed at identifying causes of these barriers, and effects on the staff performance. The study was conducted in three five-star hotels in Saudi Arabia.

Qualitative research is normally used to refer to meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things (Berg, 2008). Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding individual or group perceptions of their environment (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Qualitative research involves the studied use of and collection of a variety of empirical materials, such as case studies, personal experiences, life stories, interviews, cultural texts and productions, and observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

A case study is an interpretive research methodology and has been used widely as a methodology across several types of social research, such as sociology, psychology, history, economics, planning, administration, public policy, education, management studies and tourism (Yin, 2009; Miller and Brewer, 2003). A case study is a common way to do qualitative research (Stake, 1995). It has the ability to answer questions “why”, “how”, and “what” as it is mostly used in explanatory or exploratory researches (Saunders et al., 2009; Yin, 2009). This study takes the qualitative approach as it seeks to understand the perceptions of hotel training managers towards the major barriers they mostly face in their operations. The study makes use of a single embedded case study (with multiple units of analysis) as means of collecting empirical data.

## **Data collection**

According to Yin (2009), a single case study may be either holistic (involving a single unit of study) or embedded (involving several units of study). In this study, the international hotel chain, with the closest accessibility, was used as a single case study. The three hotels that belong to the chosen hotel chain represented the embedded units of study. To ensure

consistency in the implementation of the training functions in the hotels, it was important that the hotels of the case study to be of the same international hotel chain so the brand standards will be the same, and also the SOPs followed will be unified. The main method of data collection was the use of unstructured interviews. It is believed that the case study required interviewing training managers who have rigorous brand standards and strict policies and procedures to adhere to, which may reduce the elements of disorder, improvisation, and spontaneity among the way work is done. Three unstructured interviews were conducted in hotels in three major cities in Saudi Arabia: Dammam, Jeddah, and Riyadh. In addition to unstructured interviews, document analysis was an additional way used to collect data. The study was supported by some training material and brand standards that were used as evidence of respondents' claims in the interviews. They were not added in the appendix due to guaranteed confidentiality.

### **Validity and reliability**

According to Coolican (2008) and Yin (2009), the validity of case studies can be tested through several strategies such as using multiple sources of evidence, having key informants review draft of case study report. In order to ensure the validity of the current case study, multiple sources of evidence were used (unstructured interviews and document analysis). In addition, all three respondents were e-mailed a draft of the case study report so they can review it prior finalizing the study. According to Yin (2009), case study reliability can be ensured if the researcher followed a strict protocol for conducting the study and documented every step so that the case study can be replicated in the future producing same results. To ensure reliability in this study, the researcher initially targeted three hotels that belong to the same international chain. Then, a set of unstructured interview questions were designed and placed in the same order. Training managers were targeted and approached as respondents in all hotels. They were all asked about major barriers they face, and possible outcomes.

### **Research limitations**

Although the closest accessible international hotel chain in Saudi Arabia was approached, there are some methodological limitations that should be taken into account to maintain the quality of research with regard to this survey. Hotel training managers were conservative when answering some questions that involved hovering over sensitive information. They were mostly worried that this information if revealed, could result in their dismissal. Also, documentation was not easy to get as it similarly contained highly sensitive information.

### **Data analysis**

A single embedded case study was used to achieve the purpose of this study. Using multiple units of analysis (three hotels) in a single case study (one international hotel chain) allows the proper exploration of the major obstacles faced by the training function and the identification of their effects and possible methods of resolution. To analyze data obtained from the case study, the researcher used Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). The software used is CompendiumLD. The software is used to enable coding and categorizing large amounts of narrative texts. Respondents' interview answers were recorded, coded, narrated, and then categorized accordingly. The respondents were coded as TM1 (Training Manager of hotel/unit 1), TM2 (Training Manager of hotel/unit 2), and TM3 (Training Manager of hotel/unit 3). A cross-unit synthesis approach (table 1) was used to analyze the data, where common barriers were grouped together; other barriers (identified individually) were matched to each other.

### **Results and Discussion**

The purpose of this study is to explore major barriers that training managers in Saudi Arabian hotels are facing and their impact on the training function in the hotels. The study is aimed at identifying causes of these barriers, and effects on the staff performance. A single embedded case study approach was used, which involved unstructured interviews with hotel training managers and document analysis. The case study was conducted in three Saudi Arabia five-star international chained hotels. All three hotels represented units of the single case study as they all belong to the same chain and following the same brand standards. After conducting and analyzing the interviews along with the documents, several issues have been identified throughout all three units of the case study.

**Table 1: cross-unit synthesis**

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>TM1</b>	<b>TM2</b>	<b>TM3</b>
Employee turnover	YES	YES	YES
Local employees	YES	YES	YES
Multicultural	YES	YES	YES

workforce			
English language	YES	YES	YES
Outsourcing English courses	YES	YES	YES
Lack of permanent visas	NO	YES	NO
Local females	NO	NO	YES
Operational priorities	NO	YES	NO
Working hours	NO	YES	NO
Brand standards	NO	NO	YES
Performance management	NO	YES	NO
Online training	YES	NO	NO
Casual employees	YES	YES	NO

The results indicated that the first barrier was employee turnover, which wasn't highlighted in the literature. Increased turnover rates amongst employees on all levels make it difficult for training managers to achieve their targets. They are required to divide their time between delivering off-job training (general and specific) to all staff, manage and follow up on the on-job training with departmental trainers, manage outsourced training, and provide orientation and induction for newcomers. As turnover rates rise high, training managers become forced to multiply the time planned for orientation and induction as they will be required to deliver such training more frequently for the number of newcomers will increase. This would normally be at the expense of other training programs, which can and may well affect the hotel staff performance.

*“Every time I make a schedule for the training, I become forced to change it and tweak it a little bit to be able to squeeze orientation and induction sessions in. Turnover rates control the training plan.” (TM1)*

*“I deliver 12-15 hours of training per week for all hotel staff. A normal orientation and induction session would consume around 6 hours of the weekly training plan. That's around 40-50% of the entire weekly plan dedicated only for the newcomers. Sometimes, I become forced to conduct more than one orientation and induction session in the week to overcome the turnover rate.” (TM2)*

*“We have two strategies to choose from: either we schedule a weekly orientation and induction session and all newcomers can be invited regardless of their joining date, or we conduct the session for the newcomer on his/her joining date. We prefer the last option to avoid the wrong start.” (TM3)*

The second barrier found was local employees, which wasn't highlighted in the literature. Local staff can be considered as the main barriers for training managers. They mostly lack the culture of training, proper educational level, the culture of hospitality service or even the culture of work and its ethics. Most Saudi nationals lack the culture of training. They are challenging in terms of uncomprehending the importance of training and development. They do not see any importance of improving their own performance at work, which ends up in the lack of motivation. They also lack proper educational level, as the highly educated graduates work in higher paying industries (i.e. banks and petrol companies). This makes it more challenging as most training managers become forced to take longer time in delivering the training session as they need more time to explain the material when Saudi national employees are attending the session.

In addition, Hospitality is a new industry for the Saudi nationals as employees. About 15 years ago, it was hard to find Saudis working in a restaurant or a hotel. Due to increased unemployment, Saudi nationals started looking to work in many industries where they haven't thought about working at before, including the hospitality industry. Until nowadays,

Saudis still do not fully comprehend the concept of hospitality. Therefore, they still lack the culture of serving other people. This includes their inability to handle complaints, provide excellent service, smile and maintain eye contact, and having a friendly chat with the customers. They also lack work ethics and professionalism. The majority of local employees are always slack and careless in terms of punctuality, organizing, following orders of their bosses, achieving work objectives, adhering to hotel brand standards, adhering to hotel policies and procedures, and maintaining a proper relationship with work colleagues (especially expatriates).

*“In my country, we had the privilege of recruiting the best candidate as we had many applications for each job. Here, we don’t have this luxury as the supply of jobs is higher more than the demand of local candidates” (TM1)*

*“They lack basic knowledge of hospitality. They don’t smile and they are unwilling to serve in a welcoming attitude. Training may develop to a certain extent, but the rest is up to the person (staff) whether he/she is willing to change or not.” (TM2)*

*“We are forced to hire local candidates who are less skilled than what we need. The government is pushing us to hire locals in order to reduce their unemployment rate. The resulting challenge we face is that the local employees do not comprehend the concept and culture of service in the hospitality business. Many skills they lack cannot be developed because of their culture. We try to develop their knowledge and skills in other areas but when it comes to the jobs that really matters for a hotel, local employees cannot just perform. These jobs include waiters, housekeepers, and bellmen. However, they can perform satisfactorily in certain supporting jobs such as laundry attendants, security guards, and secretaries.” (TM3)*

The third barrier was multicultural workforce, which wasn’t highlighted in the literature. All training managers find it always challenging when they plan, design, and deliver training to their hotel employees of different cultures. Training programs such as handling customer complaints, for example, may well involve techniques of how to deal with the customer, how to talk to him/her, how and when to apologize, what body language should be conveyed...etc. These techniques may be difficult for certain cultures to comprehend and apply. Some employees of certain nationalities can perceive these techniques as humiliating and insulting. In addition to training techniques, training managers also face the same challenge when trying to use training activities. Icebreakers and teamwork games and activities may fail to show positive results because some participants can feel uncomfortable conducting them.

*“I tend to use ice breakers in my training sessions. Some employees do not go along with their colleagues because they may see it as so much fluff. They cannot stand it and eventually I lose them as participants” (TM1)*

*“Sometimes I find it challenging with training like guest complaint handling. Employees of certain nationalities are very difficult to understand the concept of apologizing for the guest for something that may be their colleagues have done.” (TM2)*

*“Personally, I face problems with certain nationalities as the employees come to the training session, regardless of the session time, just to rest and relax to get away from work. I tried many times and used several methods to ensure their concentration without any improvement” (TM3)*

The fourth barrier was the English language, which wasn’t highlighted in the literature. Training managers often feel ambushed when it comes to delivering off-job training to non-English speaking employees. The problem they face is that the vast majority of rank and file employees cannot speak proper English. Even though the human resources department should take the blame for that, sometimes they have no choice but to recruit them employees for financial and procedural reasons. Training managers find themselves faced with the fact that they have to deliver English-based training programs to non-English speaking employees. Some training managers tend to use the assistance of supervisors who can speak proper English to translate for their subordinates. Other training managers do nothing about it.

*“English is a challenge for me as we have different nationalities working here. Sometimes, I manage to deliver the message in training using body language and other audio-visual aids. But in many cases, I become obligated to get help from a supervisor to translate for me.” (TM1)*

*“Language is many times a problem for me. I get some help from departmental trainers to translate for me if they can.” (TM2)*

*“We have many Indians who only speak their local language. They work mostly in engineering and their boss is Indian as well. They don’t communicate in English in their department and therefore, it is unnecessary to learn.” (TM3)*

The fifth barrier was outsourcing English courses, which wasn't highlighted in the literature. Training managers tend to outsource certain training programs to be delivered by contracted trainers from outside the hotels. The key outsourced training programs were first aid, firefighting, and English courses. First aid training is outsourced to the ministry of health. Firefighting training is outsourced to civil defense association. English courses are normally outsourced to an English tutor or institution according to budget. The first two training programs are mostly either free or with minimum costs. The main issue when it comes to outsourcing is the English course as training managers are sometimes faced with the budget problems to outsource a tutor as a freelancer or from an institution. The freelance tutor is mostly full-time English teachers in schools who can be available to give courses for the hotel employees only on a part-time basis. This would normally be after school times, which adds up some pressure on the training managers to arrange the courses at times that are suitable for both the tutor and the employees. Most employees in all hotels finish their shift at 4:00 pm. Most schools in the country finish at 3:00 pm.

*"When I need to outsource English course, I have two options: either I go to school teachers as a freelancer or I go for adult learning institutions. I mostly go for the first option because it is cheaper and keeps me within the budget. The problem is that school teachers are only available outside school times which makes me forced to plan the English course before my schedule to fit school times." (TM1)*

*"I tend to outsource training that I do not conduct for the sake of licensing such as food hygiene, first aid, and firefighting. I tried to outsource an English teacher and an Arabic teacher, but they were very expensive. I had to conduct the English classes and Arabic classes by myself. Consequently, I got pressurized more in the time." (TM2)*

*"We easily outsource training such as first aid, firefighting...etc. They are mostly conducted by the Red Crescent and the Civil Defense for almost a very low fee. However, the only training that is challenging to outsource is the English. It is very expensive to hire an English teacher in this city with the budget we have." (TM3)*

The sixth barrier (identified only by TM2) was a lack of permanent visas, which wasn't highlighted in the literature. Several employees during 2013 were unable to obtain permanent visas as their hotels lacked certain requirements for the government to grant them visas. Consequently, these employees were offered working visit visas instead in which they are allowed to work for 3-6 months in the hotel. Then the employee is required to return back to their home country, at the expense of the hotel, to issue another working visit visa for the same period of time and so on. This issue was hindering many training managers' work as the transitional period that the employees spend in their home countries to get a new working visit visa can last between 7 days up until 2 months depending on the country, which in result obstructed their training. Another issue that resulted is that the operational side of the hotel was congested because of the visa issue. This is why training was hit with another impediment since operations come in first priority for all hotels before training.

*"Visas are a big issue here. Most of my staff here are on visit visa and, as a result, they are only available for 3-6 months. After the visa expires, the employee must go back to his country to obtain a new visit visa and so on. When he goes there to obtain the visa, he stays for as long as 1 or 2 months and more in some cases depending on the country he issues the visa from. This only gives around 8 months, instead of 12, to develop the employee." (TM2)*

The seventh barrier (identified only by TM3) was local females, which wasn't highlighted in the literature. Local females have certain requirements when they work anywhere in the country. They cannot mix with male employees in many places such as the cafeteria and offices. Training managers are sometimes faced with this cultural issue as they may be required to duplicate certain training to be given once for male employees and the other for female employees.

*"When ladies apply for jobs in the hotel, we are faced with some dilemmas. There are basically two types. The first represents ladies who wear their veils on during the interview phase and throughout the three-month probation period. After that, they take their veils off and they accept mix with men in training without any problems. The other type represents ladies who cannot accept mix with men in any training. For this type, I become forced to conduct separate training sessions for ladies only. I also faced this problem with the English course outsourced" (TM3)*

The eighth barrier (identified only by TM2) was operational priorities, which wasn't highlighted in the literature. Operation always comes in first priority before training. In many cases training sessions are canceled when the hotel is busy. Some training managers cancel training sessions automatically when the occupancy percentage is over 80% or when there is more than one function held on the same day with heavy attendance in total (over 1000 guest).

*"Business always comes in the first place before training. We have a very demanding owner who continuously requires that everything stops for the sake of a function or a busy day. To a certain extent, this may make sense. For us training managers, however, this always makes us fall behind on our schedules." (TM2)*

The ninth barrier (identified only by TM2) was working hours, which wasn't highlighted in the literature. Working hours in Saudi hotels are not much different from most hotels everywhere else in the world. Morning shifts start 7:00 am for most operational employees and 9:00 for most admin employees. As per Saudi labor law, employees are required to work a total of eight hours in addition to an hour break (nine hours in total). Working hours are considered a barrier for training managers as they are required to hold training sessions for hotel employees at timescales that are suitable for the operation. This may not be a problem if the training is to be delivered to employees working in the same department. However, some training programs require a mix of employees from several departments to attend the training at the same time. This is always a challenge for training managers.

*"Time is a challenge here. In KSA, we work a total of nine hours per day. The break hour is not paid for unlike other countries. So technically, the employee works eight hours, not seven. I find this difficult training-wise because the employee becomes exhausted and unfocused to attend the training. Also, when it comes to operations, training comes in the second place. I have to cancel training sessions when we are above 80% occupancy and/or when we have an event that is being held in the hotel for more than 300 persons." (TM2)*

The tenth barrier (identified only by TM3) was brand standards, which wasn't highlighted, as a barrier, in the literature. Although these standards are global (applied everywhere), training managers find it hard to deliver this message to their employees. Most employees (whether local or expatriates) do not have proper experience in international chained hotels. They lack understanding of terms such as brand, quality, and standards. No matter how hard they are trained on the importance of the continuance factor in applying brand standards, the performance is always not good enough.

*"We don't have the luxury of recruiting whoever we want, whenever we want, at any cost. There are certain circumstances that force you sometimes to recruit according to the budget, nationality, owner's view...etc. When this becomes the case, the newcomers mostly have no experience whatsoever in a chained hotel with brand standards to follow. This requires more effort to make people understand the meaning and importance of adhering to brand standards and providing services that are consistent with those provided in the same chain in other countries. I personally find the problem worse with local people." (TM3)*

The eleventh barrier (identified only by TM2) was performance management, which wasn't highlighted in the literature. Performance Management Programs (PMPs) were followed in the case study hotels as per policies and procedures. They are tools for evaluating the performance of any member of staff (or manager) by his/her line manager throughout the year. Two main issues were identified as challenging for training managers in the case study. First, training managers had difficulties with their own PMPs as they normally include objectives of the training department that should be achieved by the end of the year. In most cases, training managers cannot achieve their objectives for reasons out of their control (discussed above). This makes difficult for them to develop themselves. Second, training managers should be involved in the rest of the hotel staff's PMPs. These PMPs should include training-related objectives which the training manager should be aware of and following up throughout the year. In the majority of the cases, and for the same reasons, training managers struggle to help their hotel staff achieve their own PMP objectives.

*"We have a system for monitoring performance called PMP (Performance Management Program). Training managers always try to push it harder with the department heads to include training in their teams' PMPs. Luckily; the company has started to make it mandatory to include training in all hotels PMPs. However, we still face challenges with ensuring that department heads achieve their training objectives all the time." (TM2)*

The twelfth barrier (identified only by TM1) was online training, which wasn't highlighted in the literature. Online training is another issue identified in the case study. The international chain under investigation has developed their global training system to involve more online training in addition to the classroom training. All training managers in the case study have stated that this is challenging to them as the majority of their staff have very limited computer skills. This can be due to the employee's age, background, or position. Training managers believed that employees above 50 years old have no interest in using the internet at any capacity. Employees who are unskilled such as stewards, gardeners and cleaners have also no computer background.

*"I am obligated to assign training programs for employees on the company's website. Consequently, I face a lot of issues because a lot of them are unable to use the internet, or have no time or interest in doing so. A lot of them forget their user IDs and their passwords. A lot of them do not know anything about deadlines or time limits of the training. Monitoring the entire hotel employees individually is a tough job. Also, many of them become time wasting factors for me because I become forced to spend at least 15 minutes with every employee on a weekly basis just to check up on his/her online training. If we do the math, this comes up with almost 4 hours per day for this task only." (TM1)*

The thirteenth barrier (identified only by TM1 and TM2) was casual employees, which wasn't highlighted in the literature. Department heads in the hotels always ask for more staff. The human resources department can only look for safe options in order not to face allegations of breaking the immigration law. Therefore, an agency is approached to supply the hotels with casual staff. The issue is that almost all agencies supply staff to do two job in order to make money. Every casual associate arrives in the hotel to do the afternoon shift is actually spending the morning shift doing other jobs. This means that the casual staff works 18 hours per day in total.

*"For most of us, casual staff are nightmares. They come to us through agencies that are so greed. They treat their staff as slaves and make them work two jobs per day. They choose people who cannot say no to that as they all need the money, regardless of their levels of skills. We also should have part of the blame because we are accepting incompetent employees to work for us. Most of them work in the harbor as lifters in the morning. They arrive at the hotel around 3 pm. They arrive tired, hungry, sleepless...etc. Their manager cannot spare an hour for training because he would rather leave them for an hour to sleep, eat, and take rest; which is not enough" (TM1)*

*"Casual staff in our hotel help us in the restaurant. The problem is that we need them to deliver five-star service to our guests and they are clueless what service should be. Their grooming and hygiene are substandard. Their educational level is also substandard. Training for these people will be a waste of time, money and effort." (TM2)*

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was aimed at exploring major barriers that training managers in Saudi Arabian hotels are facing and their impact on the training function in the hotels. The study identified causes of these barriers, and effects on the staff performance. A single embedded case study approach was used, which involved unstructured interviews with hotel training managers and document analysis. The case study was conducted in three Saudi Arabian five-star international chained hotels. All three hotels embodied units of the single case study as they belong to the same chain and follow the same brand standards. The study contributed to the literature and practice of hotel training. This is the first single case study that covers hotel training in Saudi Arabian international chained hotels. The study concludes that the training function in international-chained hotels in Saudi Arabia is affected by eleven barriers. The barriers identified were: Employee turnover, Local employees, Multicultural workforce, English language, Outsourcing English courses, Lack of permanent visas, Local females, Operational priorities, Working hours, Brand standards, Performance management, Online training, and Casual employees.

The study recommends that hotels in Saudi Arabia should seek to increase their employees' satisfaction (local and expatriates) in order to reduce employee turnover. The study also recommends that training programs should involve more hospitality service culture and that hotels should seek graduates of hotel schools in Saudi Arabia. The study also recommends that training managers should be knowledgeable about different cultures of nationalities of their hotel employees. The study also recommends that hotels should hire full-time in-house English teacher(s), preferably a native Arabic and another native Indian. The study also recommends that all training materials be translated into all languages spoken in the hotel. The study also recommends that hotels should seek to fulfill the governmental requirements in order to obtain permanent visas. The study also recommends that human resources department should inform females upon hiring that the work environment in the hotel requires a certain level of cooperation, particularly during operations and training.

The study recommends that training managers should align their training plans with the forecast of the hotel operation in order to avoid training session's cancellations. The study also recommends that most training sessions are to be conducted during shift changes to ensure the attendance of most of the training roaster. The study also recommends that hotels should seek to hire ex-international chained hotel employees. The study also recommends that hotels translate brand standards in all languages spoken by all hotel employees to ensure adaptability. The study also recommends that training managers should enhance the hotel employees PMPs with some sort of a rewarding scheme as an incentive to increase motivation towards achieving training objectives in the hotel. The study also recommends that online training programs can be made available in all languages spoken by hotel employees. The study also recommends that hotels HR managers should aim to hire more employees on a permanent basis to allow stability in terms of work and training, and at the same time increase productivity.

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## معوقات التدريب في صناعة الضيافة بالشرق الأوسط: دراسة حالة في الفنادق السعودية

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يعتبر التدريب في الفنادق مفيدا لتطوير العنصر البشري و الذي يقع على عاتقه تقديم الخدمة للنزلاء في الفنادق. لم يتم التطرق بحثيا من قبل إلى المعوقات التي تواجه عملية التدريب داخل الفنادق في المملكة العربية السعودية (و بخاصة من وجهة نظر مدراء التدريب). الغرض من البحث هو الوقوف على أهم التحديات و الصعوبات التي تواجه مدراء التدريب بفنادق الخمس نجوم بالمملكة العربية السعودية و تأثيرها في عملية التدريب في تلك الفنادق. تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد أسباب وجود تلك العوائق و التحديات و مدى تأثيرها في أداء العاملين بالفنادق. تمت الدراسة من خلال القيام بدراسة حالة فردية مكونة من ثلاث وحدات تمثل ثلاثة فنادق خمس نجوم تنتمي إلى سلسلة فندقية عالمية واحدة و ذلك لضمان إتباعهم لنفس المواصفات القياسية للأداء و العلامة التجارية. تم جمع البيانات اللازمة للدراسة من خلال القيام بمقابلات شخصية مع مدراء التدريب بالفنادق الثلاثة بالإضافة إلى تحليل الوثائق التي تم الحصول عليها من خلالهم. تلك الوثائق تضمنت البرامج التدريبية التي يقومون بها داخل الفنادق. بعد تحليل النتائج الخاصة بالدراسة وجد ثلاثة عشر عائقا يواجه مدراء التدريب بالفنادق.

أبرز المعوقات التي تم الوقوف عليها هو إزدياد معدل الدوران الخاص بالعاملين بالفنادق مما يؤدي إلى اضطراب الخطط التدريبية بشكل مستمر. تمثلت أحد المعوقات الهامة أيضا في العاملين المواطنين و عدم قدرتهم على استيعاب مفهوم الضيافة و ثقافة الخدمة. أبرز المعوقات أيضا تمثلت في العاملات المواطنات و عدم قدرة بعضهن على الاختلاط بزملائهن الرجال في التدريب. تمثلت أحد المعوقات الهامة أيضا في البحث هي تلك المتمثلة في العمالة المؤقتة حيث يعمل العاملون المؤقتون بوظيفة صباحية مرهقة بدنيا ثم يأتون للعمل بالفندق في المساء دون راحة أو نوم كافيين مما يجعل تدريبهم مضيعة للوقت و الجهد نظرا لعدم استعدادهم النفسي و البدني للتدريب، ناهيك عن تأثير مستوى الانتاجية أيضا.

أوصت الدراسة بأن تسعى إدارات تلك الفنادق وراء زيادة الرضا الوظيفي لدى العاملين (سواء المواطنين أو الأجانب) لتقليل معدل الدوران. أوصت الدراسة بأن تسعى الفنادق إلى تعيين خريجي المدارس و المعاهد الفندقية بالمملكة لضمان استعدادهم للعمل بالمجال و إستيعاب المفاهيم الخاصة به. أوصت الدراسة بضرورة أن يكون مدراء التدريب بالفنادق على دراية تامة بثقافات العاملين المختلفة حتى يستطيعوا إيصال المعلومة لهم بشكل صحيح. أوصت الدراسة بأن تسعى إدارات الفنادق إلى تعيين مدرسين للغة الانجليزية أحدهما تكون لغته الأم العربية و الآخر تكون لغته الأم الهندية. أوصت الدراسة أيضا بأن تسعى إدارات الفنادق إلى ترجمة برامج التدريب بالفنادق إلى عدة لغات حسب جنسيات العاملين بها. أوصت الدراسة بأن تسعى إدارات الفنادق لاستيفاء متطلبات الحكومة المختلفة حتى يتسنى لها الحصول على العدد المطلوب من تأشيرات العمل بدلا من اللجوء إلى العمالة المؤقتة و بالتالي تجنب مشكلاتها. أوصت الدراسة بأن تعمل إدارة الموارد البشرية على إيضاح طبيعة العمل للمواطنات المتقدمات للعمل حتى يكن على بيئة قبل تعيينهن بالعمل. أوصت الدراسة بأن يعمل مدراء التدريب على استكشاف حركة التشغيل بشكل استباقي حتى يتسنى لهم تفادي جدول التدريب في أوقات الذروة. أوصت الدراسة بأن يتم التركيز على أوقات تغيير الورديات لتكون الأنسب للقيام بالحصص التدريبية. أوصت الدراسة بأن تسعى إدارات الفنادق إلى تعيين من لهم خبرة سابقة في العمل بالسلاسل الفندقية حتى يسهل تدريبهم على مفهوم اتباع المواصفات القياسية للعلامة التجارية. أوصت الدراسة أيضا بأن تتم ترجمة تلك المواصفات إلى عدة لغات حتى تساعد مدراء التدريب في إيصال المعلومة لكل العاملين. أوصت الدراسة بأن يحاول مديرو التدريب تشجيع العاملين على تحقيق أهدافهم السنوية من خلال برامج تحفيزية و مكافآت. تمثل العائق الثاني عشر في التدريب على الإنترنت. أوصت الدراسة بأن تكون جميع البرامج التدريبية على الإنترنت متوفرة بعدة لغات حتى يتمكن جميع العاملين من الاستفادة منها. أوصت الدراسة بأن تسعى إدارات الفنادق إلى تعيين العاملين بشكل دائم دون اللجوء للعمالة المؤقتة و بالتالي تفادي مشكلاتها.