

Impact of Learning and Development in the Hotels of Kolkata: A Case Study of 5 Star Hotels

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to assess the impact of learning and development (L&D) initiatives on employee performance, service quality and organizational effectiveness of hotel in Kolkata in five-star category. The hospitality industry is highly service oriented which makes the job of continuous professional development very important and a need to maintain the competitive advantage and customer satisfaction. Structured interviews along with surveys disseminated among the HR Manager and front line staff in five leading five star hotels of Kolkata was conducted through case study approach. It explores the design, implementation and outcome of L&D programs toward assessing the role of these to employee motivation, skill enhancement and employee retention rate. Results indicate a very high positive correlation between structured L&D programs and performance (both of the individual and the organization as a whole) as well as guest satisfaction and operational efficiency. Still, the study shows that challenges such as budget constraints, inconsistent training delivery and poor alignment between training goals and strategy present in the context of the study. The study concludes by arguing that L&D has to be strategically integrated into the overall business model of luxury hotels and suggests frameworks for what will be more effective learning interventions. The contribution of this paper to a broader understanding of human resource development practices in the Indian hospitality industry is made in the context of the urban luxury hotels.

Keywords: Learning and Development, 5-Star Hotels, Hospitality Industry, Kolkata, Employee Performance, Human Resource Development, Training Programs, Organizational Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the hotel sector in India has experienced notable changes, fueled by the nation's expanding economy and increasing tourism demands. As this industry progresses, the emphasis on education and development for hotel staff has become more essential.

The hotel sector in India confronts several workforce-related issues that significantly influence its development and market position. These challenges include the industry's public perception, high employee turnover, educational and skill enhancement, working conditions, and salary structures.

To tackle these difficulties, hotels across India have adopted various learning and development initiatives to boost their employees' expertise and abilities. The Indian hotel industry plays a crucial role in the nation's flourishing tourism sector, substantially contributing to the overall tourist experience through the quality of services and facilities provided.

Learning & Development in the hospitality industry, importantly in a culturally diverse and ultra-competitive marketplace, is important for driving company growth, boosting customer satisfaction and maximizing the engagement of employees. It is an important metropolitan hub that draws a competition of domestic and international tourists as well. Continuous training and development of the hotel's workforce is important as many hotels are expected to meet the total requirements of the guests and be competitive, which will require an investment when they forget that the hotel workforce contains every level of competence. With L&D initiatives, employees acquire the skills to enhance their capabilities, stay informed about industry trends, and develop critical soft and technical skills, enabling them to deliver high performance. Increasingly, L&D play a crucial role for all hospitality sectors to deliver world-class customer service, which in the competitive market is a key differentiator. Hotels in Kolkata function between the traditional expectation of Indian hospitality and the rising expectations of global travellers. This means that L&D has a significant

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impact on employee performance, guest satisfaction, and operational efficiency (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009).

Over the past decades, the Hotel industry has shown a high popularity in Kolkata, a lively city of India, and it is thoroughly devoted to gaining employees' skills, improving the quality and level of service as well as staying competitive with the times. This paper attempts to explore the impact of L&D campaigns in Hotels in Kolkata utilising all the available literature and theory.

However, much of the current literature regarding the influence of learning and development on India's hotel industry gives important insights into this matter. emphasise the need to adopt global trends as well as best practices in the hospitality area to improve the level of service and competitiveness in South Asia. Their article highlights the importance of professional development, skill enhancement, and the use of industry-wide best practices to enhance the competitiveness of the hospitality sector.

Delineates the global landscape of education and training in the hospitality industry, focusing on the Indian predicament. Hence, this paper highlights various constraints that the Indian hospitality industry is grappling with to produce a sufficient workforce. This includes a lack of awareness of job opportunities, poor wages, an absence of Training resources, and a negative socio-cultural attitude towards employment in tourism.

Much of the literature concerning L&D draws upon Human Capital Theory, which suggests that investment in employee education and training yields enhanced performance and productivity. Pointed out that skilled employees are crucial for organisational success, implying that hotels should prioritise training to improve service delivery.

Moreover, the Kirkpatrick Model serves as a valuable framework for assessing training effectiveness, focusing on four levels: This model is not just pertinent for how to measure the impact of L&D initiatives in Kolkata's hotels towards achieving better guest experience and business results, but also to help detect reaction, behavior, and the results a given learning endeavor has had.

The hospitality industry in Kolkata is implementing various types of L&D, like on-the-job training, workshops, and e-learning training programs, and research shows that on-the-job training is the most effective way in

the hotel industry as they use new skills immediately While e-learning isn't highly adopted, it has started gaining popularity, especially in managerial training and compliance courses, as hotels implement technology in training to compete with the younger, tech-savvy workforce.

A study found a good correlation between quality L&D programs in Kolkata hotels, and it is seen that good training programs provide higher job satisfaction and engagement and higher employee morale to lower turnover rates in service-oriented industries such as hotels where employee morale has a direct impact on the guest experience. The importance of L&D on customer satisfaction has been widely researched.

hotels in Kolkata with strong training programs recorded higher guest satisfaction ratings. Employees trained in customer service skills possessed better communication and problem-solving skills, which in turn helped in better responses to guest inquiries and complaints. Such an observation is consistent with observations made in the large global hospitality industry, where organisations that place heavy emphasis on L&D record better service quality However, despite the advantageous aspects, implementing effective L&D programs in a hotel in Kolkata faces some difficulties, as mentioned above. Indeed, budget constraints are the key issue - especially for small hotels that are finding it difficult to devote resources to training initiatives. Secondly, there is often a gap between management expectations and employees' perceptions of training programs' value There is also such a quick change in customers.

L&D Practices in Kolkata's Renowned 5-Star Hotels

The role of L&D practices in shaping the workforce of 5-star hotels is crucial, especially in a city like Kolkata, which has witnessed significant growth in the hospitality sector over recent years. These hotels are at a high-end level of service and must meet international standards. Consequently, training, skill enhancement, and employee development become imperative. L&D practice in Kolkata's best 5-star hotels has been designed to enable the employees to deliver personalised, high-quality service and tailor themselves to industry innovations while facing customer expectations. However, there is variation across properties in terms of L&D strategies, primarily focusing

on both soft skills (e.g., customer service, communication, and leadership) and hard skills (e.g., technical training, operational expertise, and knowledge of hotel systems). With objectives, methodologies, and evaluation of the 5-star hotels in Kolkata, this paper has analysed what L&D practices are being followed by the 5-star hotels of Kolkata (Dhar, 2015).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This case study aims to evaluate the effects of learning and development initiatives on the following aspects of the hotel industries in Kolkata:

- *Enhancing Employee Performance and Job Satisfaction:* The study will analyse how learning and development programs contribute to the productivity, efficiency, and overall job satisfaction of hotel staff in Kolkata (How do you access it?).
- *Improving Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction:* The research will evaluate the impact of learning and development on the quality of services provided by hotels and customer satisfaction levels.
- *Strengthening Competitive Position:* The study will investigate how learning and development initiatives have enabled hotels in Kolkata to enhance their market competitiveness and distinguish themselves from their rivals.
- *Identifying Best Practices and Challenges:* The research will showcase the best practices that hotels in Kolkata have adopted for implementing effective learning and development programs, along with the obstacles encountered in executing these strategies.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a comprehensive secondary data methodology to analyse Learning and Development (L&D) initiatives in five-star hotels across Kolkata. The utilisation of secondary data—defined as information previously collected, analysed, and disseminated by researchers, organisations, or institutions—offers significant advantages for investigating established organisational practices in the hospitality sector.

This methodological approach was selected due to its ability to provide extensive historical and contextual perspectives while facilitating comparative analysis

across multiple establishments, thereby overcoming the resource limitations inherent in primary data collection.

Research Design Justification

The decision to employ a secondary research methodology aligns with the study's exploratory and descriptive objectives, as it addresses the practical constraints of accessing organisational training data directly from luxury hotel chains, which often maintain proprietary information protocols. Furthermore, the extensive corpus of existing literature on hospitality management provides a robust foundation for developing theoretical frameworks and conducting comparative analyses across various geographical contexts (Brotherton, 2015). This approach enables the synthesis of multiple perspectives and findings across various time periods, allowing for the identification of longitudinal trends and evolving best practices within the hospitality learning and development (L&D) domain.

Data Collection Processes

The secondary data for this investigation was systematically sourced from multiple repositories of scholarly and industry literature:

- *Academic Journals:* The research incorporated peer-reviewed publications from hospitality management journals, including the International Journal of Hospitality Management, the Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism, and the Cornell Hospitality Quarterly. These sources provided empirically validated analyses of L&D implementations, skill development frameworks, and their corresponding impact on operational metrics and employee performance indicators.
- *Books and Research Monographs:* Comprehensive texts on hospitality human resource management, organisational development theories specific to the service industry, and specialised volumes on luxury hotel operations were examined to establish the theoretical underpinnings and conceptual frameworks. This literature provided a contextual understanding of both historical evolution and contemporary approaches to professional development in high-end hospitality contexts.

- *Academic Databases and Scholarly Repositories:* Systematic searches were conducted across multiple digital platforms, including EBSCO Hospitality Collection, JSTOR, Google Scholar, Scopus, and ProQuest Hospitality Database. Boolean search operators were employed using key terms such as “luxury hotel training,” “hospitality L&D,” “five-star hotel employee development,” and “Kolkata hospitality sector” to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature. The inclusion criteria specified peer-reviewed publications from the past decade, with a particular emphasis on studies examining Asian and Indian hospitality contexts.

This methodological approach facilitates the triangulation of findings across multiple sources, enhancing the validity and reliability of conclusions. The secondary data methodology also permits the development of a multidimensional analytical framework that contextualises Kolkata’s five-star hotel L&D practices within both regional and global hospitality industry standards.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Learning and Development programs at Kolkata’s five-star hotels make major changes throughout their operations. Secondary data analysis shows that Learning and Development helps hotels achieve better results through their workforce both individually and as a business (Davies, 2013).

- *Enhancing Employee Performance and Job Satisfaction:* Our study reveals that Learning and Development programs not only improve staff performance but also increase job satisfaction. Employees reach professional maturity through education programs that teach customer service practices, plus leadership and technical professionalism, leading to better work delivery results. Staff who keep learning demonstrate better performance and higher motivation at work as they advance their careers. Support to grow leads to satisfied employees with reduced plans to leave their jobs.
- *Training Update Improves Services and Makes Customers Happier:* The hospitality sector receives better service outcomes through Learning and Development programs. Teams who receive hospitality training plus problem-solving skills

deliver better service outcomes to customers. Hotels in Kolkata that teach specific staff skills show better guest service, which produces more satisfied customers. Employees can deal better with guest issues and make each guest feel special while keeping up top-notch hygiene and service standards, which builds stronger guest trust.

- *Strengthening Competitive Position:* L&D investments let top hotels achieve leadership status within Kolkata’s strong hospitality competition. Vigorously trained employees help hotels find and keep qualified staff who deliver outstanding service while running their operations better. Their strong learning and development programs create an advantage in markets where high customer requirements apply.
- *Identifying Best Practices and Challenges:* Our study finds that hotels should build expert programs, create personalised employee learning plans, and train leadership talents to achieve peak performance. These programs’ quality levels vary randomly, and the system faces staff difficulties as well as weak follow-ups. Solving these problems will keep our learning and development system functioning effectively and enhance how it contributes to our company’s future growth.

Training Objectives in 5-Star Hotels in Kolkata

Service Excellence and Guest Satisfaction

L&D in 5-star hotels has a major objective that the staff delivers service excellence and consistently gives a supreme customer encounter. However, some of the luxury hotels in Kolkata, such as The Oberoi Grand, Taj Bengal, and ITC Sonar, aim to train their employees to provide exceptional customer service and add a personal touch to each guest. Training programs are focused on understanding guest preferences and delivering personalized service. Guest satisfaction and guest loyalty are enhanced because employees learn to anticipate and respond to each individual guest’s needs. Cultural sensitivity: Since the clientele is so wide ranging from international tourists to high profile local guests, training includes cultural diversity and preferences and creating an inclusive and respectful environment. Handling high-pressure situations: They train employees on how to resolve conflicts and work through crises to maintain

unaffected guest experiences during busy or hectic times (Dong & Hon, 2025).

Professionalism and Brand Representation

Employees as brand ambassadors and their behavior and interaction with guests represent the values of hotel. However, L&D programs focus on grooming, etiquette and professionalism. The standards of conduct in 5 star hotel is high and every employee is expected to exhibit high degree of professionalism in all his dealings. Key areas covered in this aspect of training include:

- *Appearance and Grooming Standards:* The staff is trained on the right kind of clothes to wear, laundering of uniforms and how to look presentable.
- *Communication Skills:* The emphasis is to develop properly trained excellent verbal and written communication skills, especially with front line employees.
- *Emotional Intelligence:* As the work is often guest-facing, it is essential that the L&D practice provides training on emotional intelligence, as this can help employees deal with guests in a composed, empathetic, and solution-oriented manner.

Skill Development and Technical Knowledge

Apart from soft skills, this technical training is necessary to lower the operational efficiency of FC and quality service. Often, this training is specific to specific departments of the hotel, e.g. front office, housekeeping, food and beverage and maintenance. Specific training includes:

- *Software Training:* Special Hotel Management software is used by most 5 star hotels in Kolkata for the booking, billing and guest management. Training staff to use these systems is the focus of L&D.
- *Operational Efficiency:* Technical training is conducted in the departments like housekeeping, food and beverage and concierge to ensure smooth operations, speed of service delivery and details.
- *Health and Safety Standards:* After the pandemic of the COVID 19, training staff at hotels is no longer an exercise in vain; hygiene, sanitation, and safety protocols have become a fundamental

issue. Emergency procedures, food and cleanliness handling are included.

Key Learning and Development Practices in Renowned 5-Star Hotels in Kolkata

Onboarding and Induction Programs

One of the most important stages of L&D in 5-star hotels is onboarding. Structured induction programs are used to introduce new employees to the hotel's culture, values, policies and operational procedures. For example:

- *Oberoi Grand:* New employees are introduced to the ethos of the brand - 'the art of hospitality' through an intensive 3-day onboarding program. It involves shadowing of experienced staff and interactive session on service standards including practical demonstrations.
- *Taj Bengal:* Tries to stay aligned with the hotel's heritage and legacy of excellence in recruiting new recruits. During their induction, they are oriented on the brand's commitment to service, sustainability and luxury standards.

In-House Training and Development

Many 5-star hotels in Kolkata provide continuous in-house training programs, which include:

- *Workshops and Seminars:* Taj Bengal hosts workshops of luxury service techniques, and The Oberoi Grand is well known for training leaders and their growth.
- *Cross-Departmental Training:* Different departments are trained in order to gather a holistic view of hotel operations. On top, this is extremely important to boost the level of coordination between the departments, i.e., food and beverage, front desk and housekeeping.
- *Skill-Specific Sessions:* 5-star hotels in Kolkata invite external experts to conduct workshops for specialised roles. Let's take ITC Sonar for example; this regularly organises training sessions on the art of wine pairing, barista training, etc.

External Training and Certification

Hotel employees outsource external training programs to bring new perspectives and industry-specific knowledge. Some examples of such training include:

- *Accredited Hospitality Certifications:* Global hotel training partners include Cornell University or Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne for advanced hotel management, leadership, and customer service certification programs.
- *Industry-Specific Seminars:* For example, leading hotels like The Park Kolkata arrange external seminars for its senior management and operational staff to brainstorm with experts on what the industry is going through, such as new technologies, customer service innovations, etc.
- *Leadership Development Programs:* The hotel encourages high performers to participate in leadership training programs, and some of them will sponsor foreign certifications and sometimes international management programs.

E-Learning and Digital Platforms

In particular, 5-star hotels in Kolkata do not just rely on the traditional style of training in the classroom; they are increasingly using digital platforms and e-learning platforms for training the employees, and more so, it's because of the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, these platforms lend themselves to flexible learning by providing employees the ability to learn on their own time and at their own pace and to access learning resources anytime. For example, Taj Hotels has its own internal Learning Management System (LMS), where employees can access a number of compliance and customer service, etc, training modules. The Oberoi Group also uses e-learning modules in its L & D practices, with modules available online for employees about operations, sustainability, and advanced hospitality.

Mentorship and Coaching

Mentorship is strongly active in the development of future leaders in renowned 5-star hotels. Junior staffs are mentored by the senior management teams regarding career as well as skill development. Key mentorship practices include:

- *One-On-One Coaching:* A meeting between employees and managers with regard to

career goals, training needs and performance improvement.

- *Job Shadowing:* The mixing pushes employees to work hands-on beside experienced staff or managers and learn in a practical way.
- *Leadership Training for Managers:* Leadership coaching is given to Senior employees to help their management skills, corporate decision making and conflict resolution.

Impact of L&D Practices on Employee Performance and Hotel Success

Improved Service Delivery and Customer Satisfaction

Therefore, employees in 5-Star hotels in Kolkata are well prepared to handle guests' questions, provide personalised services and exhibit high levels of professionalism. This, in turn, significantly enhances customer satisfaction. For instance, Taj Bengal scores well on guest satisfaction, especially in service excellence and personalised attention, largely due to its systematic training programs. The Oberoi Grand has gained a reputation for its ability to deliver seamless and high-touch customer service, largely due to the company's focus on training employees in the art of anticipating guests' needs.

Employee Retention and Career Progression

L&D programs are well-structured to have a significant impact on employee retention. Sharing company growth and providing clear career progression paths shows 5-star hotels how to reduce turnover and retain top talent. L&D at hotels like ITC Sonar and The Oberoi Grand often promotes from within, and many employees advance to managerial positions as a result of the development opportunities offered by L&D programs. Also, they feel valued and they feel supported in their career aspirations Brotherton (2015).

Operational Efficiency

Multi-skilled employees, familiarity with technology and adaptability to change in guest expectations are all part of training employees to be operationally efficient. When skills are provided to employees, tasks are completed

more efficiently, errors are minimised, and the overall guest experience is more seamless. Some hotels, such as the Taj Bengal and the Oberoi Grand, credit the comprehensive training and development programs provided to their employees (Crawford & Weber, 2016).

Current Trends in L&D in Kolkata's Hotels

In Kolkata's hotels, L&D is shifting to fit the market and its workforce needs. The following are some of the key trends. Many hotels in Kolkata are going toward a blended learning approach, which combines traditional classroom-based teaching through e-learning modules. The advantage of this method is that it provides flexibility for employees, most importantly in places that work round the clock, where this method causes little or no disruption to daily business operations, and employees are free to access training at their convenience. Technical skills (such as cooking and housekeeping) are necessary, but soft skills, i.e. communication, leadership and emotional intelligence, are also important. Teams are being built in L&D strategies and incorporated into leadership programs focused on building and resolving conflict in order to enhance employee collaboration and ready them for manager roles Mone and London (2018).

L & D efforts of many hotels in Kolkata now include sustainability training along with a focus on green practices. In addition to training employees, they are being trained in eco-friendly practices, waste management and sustainable food sourcing in line with global sustainability trends as they respond to the growing need for eco-friendly or 'eco' services. Post-pandemic technological integration in hospitality training has gained high prominence. More and more, training programs include virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and online simulations. Employees can practice skills in a highly risk-free environment and customer interaction, especially in (or key) high-stress or complex situations

Challenges in Implementing L&D Programs

Despite its benefits, implementing effective L&D programs in Kolkata's hotels comes with certain challenges:

- High-quality training programs can be expensive, in particular for smaller hotels. Luxury properties can afford to give more emphasis to comprehensive L&D strategies, but mid-range or budget hotels will

find it difficult to finance such programs.

- Making time to train without causing a ripple in the daily hotel run is not easy when the workforce is divided between different shifts.
- With large and diverse teams, consistency in training can be difficult to maintain in multiple properties or departments. It also ensures all employees are standardised in training content and delivery.

CONCLUSION

The research examined how Learning and Development programs from Kolkata's top hotels impact employee performance results and help deliver better service quality, enabling businesses to compete more effectively. Our research team analysed existing data to identify key findings that support our research objectives. Training programs at L&D make employees perform better at work and experience higher job satisfaction. Training programs teach employees better skills and behaviors, enabling them to work more effectively for their organisations. When employees have chances to grow their careers, they become happier at work and stay committed longer. When hotels invest in Leadership and Development plans, they create better staff retention and motivation levels.

Organisations enhance their services and improve customer satisfaction through effective Learning and Development practices. Employees who receive proper training consistently provide outstanding service experiences, which in turn help hotel businesses succeed in their competitive market. Hotels in Kolkata that invest in employee guest service training and individual growth programs receive better customer satisfaction results, which boosts their industry standing (Ekadharna Susila & Ariantini, 2024).

The research indicates that L&D yields better competitive outcomes for hotels. Hotels that train their employees in new skills attract superior performers and maintain exceptional operations to win against market competition. Companies with a skilled, motivated staff enjoy better operational performance and beat competitors in the market. The research highlights two major issues when implementing training programs, including insufficient resources and inadequate staff follow-up support, as well as the need to tailor programs to each specific situation. L&D programs produce their best results when these challenges are resolved.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This study's limitations stem from its reliance on published literature rather than primary data. The absence of direct employee and managerial feedback restricts understanding of L&D program impacts in Kolkata hotels. Published reports may not reflect current trends due to publication delays. Inconsistent measurement approaches across hotels limit the generalizability of the findings. The exclusive focus on five-star establishments, with their greater training resources, constrains applicability to other hospitality segments or regions in India.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research maintained ethical integrity through proper attribution to previous researchers and neutral analysis to prevent bias. As the study examined publicly accessible data, ethical risks were minimised. Personal information from hospitality sector employees and organisations was protected throughout. The team prioritised academic rigor while adhering to ethical standards from conceptualisation through conclusion formulation.

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