

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA  
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION, KUMASI**

**TRAINING STRATEGIES OF FRONT OFFICE PERSONNEL IN THE  
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY. A CASE STUDY OF THREE STAR HOTELS IN  
THE CAPE COAST MUNICIPALITY**



**DECEMBER, 2020**

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**(190010572)**

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Studies, University of Education, Winneba, and in partial fulfillment of requirement  
for the award of the Master of Technology (Catering and Hospitality) degree.

**DECEMBER, 2020**

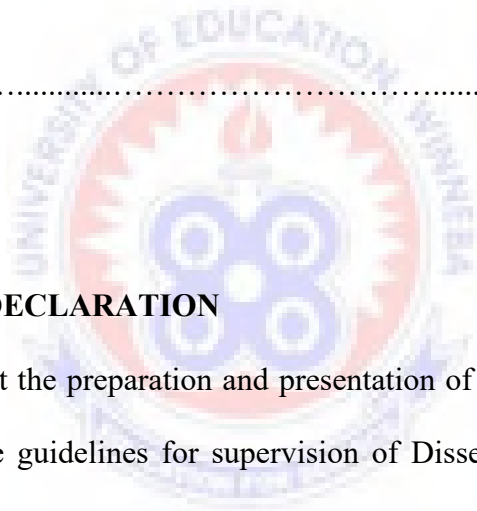
**DECLARATION**

**STUDENT'S DECLARATION**

I, REGINA BOATEMAH, declare that this Dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....



**SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. (MRS) DOREEN DEDO ADI

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my good self Regina Boatemah and my husband.



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## ABSTRACT

The front office is the heart of any hotel industry. Service performances of front office personnel are therefore jeopardized because of lack of training. The study evaluates training needs of front office personnel in 3 Star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality. Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. Purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting 64 front office personnel from sixteen (16) registered 3-star hotel in the Cape Coast Municipality. Questionnaire was used in gathering information from the front office personnel. Coding was done and the data from completed questionnaires was entered on the SPSS 23.0. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation was used in analyzing the data. The study revealed that training strategies are employed by the 3star hotels to improve front office personnel operational performance. The study showed that continuously changing environment, reduced patronage from customers, increased in complaint from customers are the major factors that influence training of front office personnel. The study found a positive and significant ( $p=0.000<0.01$ ) relationship between training strategies employed by the 3star hotels and front office personnel performance. The study concluded that training strategies affect front office personnel performance. It was recommended that hotel managers should make the front office personnel know the training strategy and understand the importance of it.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Over the years in Ghana, the hotel industry as a great industrial component believably has experienced some growth with a good footing for future development. According to Ghana Statistical Service (2018), the main contributors to the increased economic activity in the services sector were Hotel and Restaurants (76.1%). The hospitality industry has contributed significantly to the country's economy, particularly in recent times, as the sector continues to demonstrate its potential as a key driver of growth. To have success, and maintain the success, every hotel demands extraordinary abilities and sustained efforts from its employees and to enhance guest perception (Fischer, Khan, Khemani, & Najmi, 2009). Enhancing guest perceptions of service quality has become an important goal of the hotel industry in order to achieve such a goal, hotel managers try to increase employees' knowledge, skills and abilities by investing in a number of human resource practices (Kuada, 2015).

According to Meijerink, Bondarouk, and Lepak (2016), four specific customer service characteristics have the greatest impact on repeat business and customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry: competence, friendliness, knowledge, and service attitude. Here, competence refers to the hotel front personnel problem solving and working performance. Friendliness refers to front office personnel professionalism and dedication. Knowledge refers to the hotel-specific knowledge, skills, and other information that the employee holds about their industry and their specific job. Service attitude includes service providers' enthusiasm, grace, politeness, and kindness (Kuo,

2007), as well as front office personnel patience, conscientiousness, and empathy (Kuo, 2007). In addition, service attitude is one of the most important aspects in hotel industry. Front office personnel are the department from which customers will see these characteristics. Service attitude depends on what the customers expect from the service and the way in which the service has been provided (Seijts, Billou, Crossan, Billou, & Crossan, 2010). Because of this, as well as front office personnel duty as the primary provider of customer needs, they are the most important department in the whole hotel (DePaulo, 1992).

The front office personnel quality performance deal with customer requests and complaints successfully by generating new ideas for service improvement and offering novel solutions. Creative performance and service recovery performance appear to be important aspects of front office personnel service delivery (Hon, Chan, & Lu, 2013). Front office personnel are the face of the hotel, and they have to offer customers professional and positive service in order to ensure customer satisfaction (Agarwal, 2016). Front desk employees can contribute to the repeated business if they are friendly and provide exceptional care. In addition, a good first impression on customers has an impact on hotel branding and profits (Girard, 2013).

Front office personnel high-quality service affect hotels' financial performance (Sundaram & Webster, 2014), if they demonstrate good behaviors and create strong first impressions which can help the hotel have a more positive reputation and more repeated customers. Training of front office personnel is an essential and inseparable part in hotel industry in order to provide the employees with knowledge, skills and attitudes that will improve their current or future job performance as front office personnel.

In a global environment, ever more complex and obscure, knowledge and skills are the sole sources that create competing advantages. And for this reason, training is often considered a tool to achieve organizational objectives. Thus, employee training is becoming an optimal response to complex challenges of business (Driscoll & Driscoll, 2005). After selecting the employees from management, workers should be trained according to their job, orientation should be organized before their work and other kinds of training be held later. Regarding the growing quality of service, front office personnel play an important role therefore developing front office personnel by giving them continuous training is necessary (Driscoll & Driscoll, 2005; Kim, 2007). Front office personnel training helps the hotel to achieve its goal while in the same time enables employees to do a better job.

Every hotel has need for trained and experienced people in order to effectively perform their activities. Tasks on today's hotels have become complex, and the importance of educating employees has grown. Front office personnel training is a necessary part of the hotel managers activities and hotel managers have understood how important it is to hold a training in ever changing and complex work environment. (Obeidat, 2012). Tepeci (2009) is also of the view that, there is no denying fact that a quality training program assures that employees have the tools they need to succeed in the job they do. Every company has processes and challenges unique to their organization, and that means that whether an employee is new or seasoned, quality, customized training can be elusive and faced some challenges (Katz, 2009). Some difficulties facing a training program include: time constraints, high rate of turnover, overwhelming employees with too much information, inexperienced employees, and the uniqueness of each employee.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

One of the main obstacles which occur in hotels is the lack of training and development. Managers of hotel fails to train front office personnel when recruited into a specific position that suit the job description, it is unlikely that the front office personnel possess all the skills and knowledge that makes his/her fully functioning (Decenzo & Robbins, 2007). A new employed front office personnel often needs months to learn the goals, rules, regulations, structure and working culture of the hotel to adapt and get in the same pace with other colleagues. This is where training takes its first role of guiding and helping the front office personnel to adjust their qualities fit to the hotel needs as soon as possible. The process of training goes on following the front office personnel career path to help them improve their abilities for further career development.

The researcher observed in the various hotels in Cape Coast Municipality that front office personnel are given induction and orientation but effective training. This resulted in bad impression of guests in the front office leading to loss of guests, and also leaking the hotels information to unauthorized people including guests which is a bad attribute of a receptionist. It is in this regard that the researcher seeks to evaluate the training needs of front office personnel in 3 Star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality.

## **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the training strategies of front office personnel in 3 star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Examine the training strategies of front office personnel in 3 star hotels.
2. Ascertain the factors influencing training of front office personnel in 3star hotels.
3. Investigate the effects of training strategies on front office personnel performance in service delivery.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions were developed

1. What are the training strategies of front office personnel in 3star hotels?
2. What are the factors that influence the training strategies of front office personnel in 3star hotels?
3. How does training strategies affect front office personnel performance in service delivery?

#### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The result of the study will help determine the training strategies of front office personnel in 3star hotels. Also, the finding of the study will reveal the factors that influence the training strategies of front office personnel in 3star hotels.

The results of data analysis can be useful to hospitality industry, since the Ghana hotel industry is still growing hence needs more update to develop with. Little seems to be known about the effects of training front office personnel on the service quality of the hotel industry in the country. Training strategies of front office personnel will help them keep giving positive contribution in the form of the best performance.



From the academic perspective, the findings could be used to further research and to better understand the training strategies of front office personnel in 3 star hotels.

### **1.7 Delimitation of the Study**

This study was delimited to front office personnel of 3star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. Specifically, the study concentrated on the training strategies of front office personnel in 3star hotels, the factors influencing training strategies of front office personnel in 3star hotels, and the effects of training strategies on front office personnel performance in service delivery.

### **1.9 Organisation of the Study**

The study was organized into five chapters. The first chapter contain the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and scope of the study. The second chapter reviews the theoretical and empirical basis of the study. The literature reviewed was related to the topic under the following subheadings: Introduction, concept of front office, front office personnel characteristics, training strategies of front office personnel, factors influencing training strategies of front office personnel, and effects of training strategies on front office personnel performance.

The third chapter highlight the research methodology with the following subheadings research design, target population, sample size and sampling techniques, validity of the instruments, reliability of the instruments, data collection procedure and data analysis. The fourth chapter contain the data analysis, interpretation and discussions. Chapter five comprise the summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature on the training strategies of front office in the hospitality industry. The chapter specifically looks at the overview of hospitality industry, concept of front office, front office personnel characteristics, training strategies of front office personnel, and factors influencing training of front office personnel. This section further reviews the challenges of front office personnel training in the hospitality industry, and the effect of training strategies on front office personnel performance.

#### 2.2 Overview of Hospitality industry

Hospitality is the relationship process, presentation, formality and procedure experienced between a visitor/ customer/ guest and a host. It specifically includes the reception and entertainment of those who require or invited to experience an organization's service. Taking all this into account is in order so as to provide excellent customer service. The way in which different cultures and subcultures expect to be treated in terms of the hospitality offered wavers greatly and it is important that hospitality is measured in terms of what the customer expects as opposed to what the employees themselves expect (Suttis & Wortman, 2011).

According to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS, 2012), the hospitality industry is classified as part of the larger service-providing industry and is divided into two sectors: food and accommodation services and arts and entertainment. The hotel and restaurant industries are included within the food and accommodation sector. People who work at an amusement park are included within the

arts and entertainment sector. Within the food and accommodation sector, there are two sub-sectors: accommodation and food services and drinking places. Establishments such as hotels, which provide customers with lodging, and places that prepare meals, snacks or beverages for immediate consumption are considered hospitality establishments. Job descriptions within the food and beverage hospitality industry include hotel motel and resort desk clerks, fast food cooks, restaurant cooks, waiters, waitresses and combined food preparation and serving workers (NAICS, 2012).

### **2.2.1 The Hospitality industry in Ghana**

The hospitality industry in Ghana comes under the purview of the ministry of Tourism. The ministry of tourism was created in 1993 with the mandate to develop, promote and coordinate all the tourism activities in Ghana. The ministry is the policy making body with two implementing agencies: The Ghana Tourism Authority and the Hotel and Catering Training Institute (HoTCATT) (Touring Ghana.com). The government established the Ministry of Tourism to underscore its commitment to tourism development, and with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), prepared a 15-Year Tourism Development Plan for the period 1996 to 2010 (WTO, 1999). The tourism sector has received some considerable attention in the economic development strategy of Ghana Since the late 1980s. The number of tourist arrivals and amount of tourists' expenditure has steadily increased, while both public and private investment activity in various tourism sub-sectors have

Ghana moved up from the seventeenth position in 1985 to eighth in 1998 among the top twenty (20) leading tourism revenue-earners in Africa (WTO, 1999). The international tourist arrivals in Ghana has increased steadily from nearly 114,000 in

1988 to about 348,000 in 1998, at an annual average growth rate of about 20 percent. With respect to tourist's expenditure, international tourism receipts grew at an average annual rate of 41.3 percent from about \$55.3 million in 1988 to about \$285 million in 1998. This makes tourism the third largest earner of foreign exchange currently ranking behind mineral and cocoa exports (Ghana Tourist Board, 1999).

The hospitality industry consists of broad category of fields within the service industry that includes lodging, restaurants, event planning, theme parks, transportation, cruise line, and additional fields within the tourism industry. The lodging sector in the hospitality industry forms the most crucial part since most of the other services are in one way or the other provided by most standard hotels. Lodging is a type of residential accommodation where people who travel and stay away from home for more than a day lodge for a fee. The growth in tourism can also be seen in the expansion of activities in the hotel sector. A number of internationally-branded hotels are based in Accra. As at May 2017, there were 2723 hotels and lodges in Ghana. Ghana's hospitality industry grew 1.2 per cent from 2015 to 2016. Citing the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), Ghana's tourism industry is expected to expand by 5.6 per cent in 2016 and maintain an annual growth rate of 5.1 per cent per annum from 2017 through to 2027 (Ghana Business News, 2017).

## **2.2 Overview of Front Office**

The front office or reception is an area where visitors arrive and first encounter a staff at a place of business (Govindarajulu, 2004). Front office personnel deal with whatever question the visitor has and put them in contact with a relevant person at the company. According to McCoy and Evans (2005), the front office includes roles that affect the revenues of the business. The term front office is in contrast to the term back

office which refers to a company's operations, personnel, accounting, payroll and financial departments which do not interact directly with customers. As per Leaman (1995), the front office receives information about the customers and then passes this on to the correct department within the company. The front office can also contact the marketing or sales department should the customers have questions. The company needs to give training to the front office manager as this position come in contact with customers the most.

Leaman (1995) indicated that the most common work for the front office staff is to get in touch with customers and help out internally in the office. Staff working at the front office can also deal with simple tasks, such as printing and typing tasks and sorting emails. Although front office staff might only need to perform tasks such as answering the phone, using the printer and fax machine training is still needed on these tasks. Front office is related to a service delivery system, where employees engage with customers. It uses the parameter of labour intensity to figure out the distinctive characteristics of a service. Front office is the first customer facing department that a guest meets, and the first port of call for the majority of guests with any queries or problems. Some of the key functions performed by front office are outlined by Tewari (2009). He states that some of the main functions concerning front office are:

- Sale of rooms;
- Receive and register guests (Check-in) and assign rooms;
- Maintain room availability;
- Monitor and handle guest accounts;
- Handle all guest queries and complaints;
- Conclude guests stay with issuing of bills and taking of payment;
- Act as an information point for guests concerning the surrounding area;

- Undertake daily financial tasks, such as end of shift banking;
- Co-ordinate guest services;
- Facilitate communication with all departments in the hotel;

Baker and Riley (1994) indicated that front office is where guests gain their first important impression, and furthermore, it is a communication hub for the hotel's operation. Vallen and Vallen (2009), go further, describing front office as: "a bundle of duties and guest services." These two definitions go some way to outlining the importance front office plays in the delivery of customer service, as well as ensuring standards are met. The front office team needs to be knowledgeable of both the standards and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place, in order for standards to be achieved. In relation to standards, it is the front office team's job to ensure that the customer's first contact with the hotel is a positive experience. This all important first impression will be based upon the welcome and the efficiency of the check-in process, both of which pertain to the standards in place. Incorporated into the delivery of these standards is customer service. It is the job of the front office team to manage the service encounter effectively. Jones and Lockwood (2004), observe that the service encounter is of paramount importance to the operational success of a department.

Jones and Lockwood (2004) pinpoint that it is about exceeding the expectations of guests, not just meeting them. Zeithaml et al (1990), goes further, describing the dimensions of service that customers expect to receive. The five dimensions are: reliability; tangibility; responsiveness; assurance and empathy. A study by Parasuraman (1991), provides further enhancement to the five dimensions by demonstrating what is needed to exceed customer expectation. He states that customers believe reliability is the most important factor in meeting customer expectations. In addition process dimensions, such as assurance, responsiveness and empathy, are the most important

aspects of exceeding guest expectations. In order for a front office team to be able to deliver these dimensions, it is important that they receive the correct training. This is down to the manager; it is based upon their experience, knowledge and management style.

### **2.3 Front Office Personnel Characteristics**

The characteristics of front office personnel include competence, knowledge, friendliness and service attitude. Competence, hotel front desk employees' problem solving and working performance, was shown in the study of Webster, (2006) and the study of Sundaram and Webster (2000) as important. Friendliness, hotel front desk employees' professionalism and dedication, was shown in the study of Seijts et al., (2010) as important. Knowledge refers to the hotel specific knowledge, skills, and other information that one holds about their field and their specific job (Shaw Brown, & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994). Service attitude includes service providers' enthusiasm, grace, politeness, and kindness (Kuo, 2007), as well as their patience, conscientiousness, and empathy (Kuo, 2007). In addition, service attitude is one of the most important aspects in service industry (Kuo, Chen, & Lu, 2012).

#### **2.3.1 Competency**

According to Webster's dictionary, it defines competence as the ability to carry out an assigned task efficiently and without failure or compromise. Competence effectively satisfies companies' and employees' service value (Meijerink, Bondarouk, & Lepak, 2016). In the workplace, this means one is adept and has the required degree of prowess in the articulation of the required work. Further, it signifies that the worker understands the area of expertise of the assigned work and is prepared to handle any

problems that may come in the line of work (Sundaram & Webster, 2000). A competent hotel employee comprehends their tasks and is able to use the learned skills for both hotel improvements and the specific tasks with which they are entrusted (Sundaram & Webster, 2000).

Hotel front office personnel competency is one of the most important factors that determine whether customers intend to revisit or not (Ajzen, 2005). The front desk employees in hotels play a more important role than the front line employees in other enterprises such as venture capital, retail companies etc because they manage so much of the customer experience. Where the front desk employees in other enterprises have slightly easier tasks such as receiving packages or showing clients to a meeting room, hotel front desks greet customers, ensure proper services, and make sure rooms are prepared (Sundaram & Webster, 2000). Because the front desk is the face of the hotel, their competency will help determine how long customers are willing to stay with the hotel next time (Seijts et al., 2010). In addition, if customers already had a good experience with the hotel, they are more likely to promote the hotel their acquaintances, friends, and families to revisit the hotel (Seijts et al., 2010). Hence, the competence is an important factor to satisfy customers satisfaction as well (Meijerink, Bondarouk, & Lepak, 2016). If customers need help, the front desk should both provide basic service and attend to extra concerns based on problem solving and working performance (Mast, 2007).

Front office personnel must be attentive and pay close attention to the customers' mood and emotion and satisfaction, so that they can tell what kind of customers they will be and thereby accommodate them (Meijerink, Bondarouk, & Lepak, 2016). This also shows that the hotel is trying to offer their best appearance and emotional care towards customers (Sundaram & Webster, 2000; Liu, & Liu, 2008). The



customers will thus associate the good impressions of the particular employee with the hotel in the long run and are more likely to come back to the same hotel they stayed at because of that great service and treatment (Paul Ekman Group, 2016). Therefore, employees' competency earns trust from customers and creates a hospitable environment in the hotel. Their ability of problem solving and working performance determine the extent of customers' trust. In addition, if customers trust hotel employees, it is equal that they will trust the entire hotel as well (Sundaram & Webster, 2000). If the hotel employees provide their genuine and high quality services, there is no doubt that it will benefit their hotel marketing, sales, and reputation in the hospitality industry (DePaulo, 1992).

### **2.3.2 Friendliness**

In the context of service industries, friendliness refers to a characteristic of behaving as a friend, that is, being kind, welcoming, outgoing, and pleasant in customer interactions (Shaw Brown, & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1994). Having a friendly employee is the best way to impress the guest and show them professionalism and dedication (Seijts et al., 2010). In addition, friendliness is not only important to the hotel industry, but also important to any service industries (Sundaram & Webster, 2000). A good front desk employee will create a comfortable welcoming environment for the guest, and their friendliness should be visible to the customers even before the employees can say a word to them (Paul Ekman Group, 2016). Moreover, the front desk employee is the first person that a guest will meet every day since it is the doorway to other parts of and other rooms in the hotel (Seijts et al., 2010). Thus, they must always be friendly and professional, as they are the only point of contact between the hotel and the guest before accessing other places within the hotel (Sundaram & Webster, 2000). They must also

stay calm under pressure as a gesture of kindness, even when they are dealing with personal emotional issues (DePaulo, 1992). By doing this, front desk employees illustrate that the hotel will offer the best services in a gentle manner before the customers spend their time and money there (Seijts et al., 2010). Front desk employees could also make the customers stay longer or even come back to the same hotel in the future by being friendly. Additionally, those customers may be more willing to bring their friends or families, which will increase the profit levels of the hotel (Barnum & Wolniansky, 1989).

When people are friendly, others will be well-intentioned and open to reciprocity. Hence, they will learn pleasant and friendliness from each other. It is no doubt to create a perfect environment of conversation (DePaulo, 1992). Furthermore, friendliness maximizes the relationships of each other. In the hospitality industry, offering to help customers in need, engaging in conversation with customers in line next to you and smiling at customers or even a stranger are all examples of being friendliness (Sundaram & Webster, 2000). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

### **2.3.3 Knowledge**

For employees, knowledge refers to the facts, skills, and other information that one holds about their field and their specific job (Webster, 2006). In terms of hospitality industry, hotel knowledge determines service quality as well (Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo's, 2006). It is acquired from theoretical studies, but it is used for practical understanding of the subject matter. In the hotel setting, familiarity with the hotel, as well as its tools and operations, indicate to customers how knowledgeable about the hospitality industry the employee likely is (DePaulo, 1992). Customers can also tell if a front desk employee is knowledgeable about the business by how well they handle

incoming calls and emails, which will make the customer feel like they too will get a similar type of treatment (Sastry & Ramsingh, 2011). Additionally, by showing confidence when helping customers, a front desk employee can also make them trust that the employees at the hotel are knowledgeable in their fields (Seijts et al., 2010). This builds the customers' confidence in the employee and therefore the hotel, which can help build customer loyalty.

Based on the statistics from International Student Guide, almost 90% of hotel Management in Training program employees owe a degree of hotel management from college or university (Marcel, 2014). If hotel front desk employees graduated from hotel management program, they must be familiar with hotel-specific knowledge. It is important for them to use specific knowledge to hospitality industry (Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2006). For example, front desk employees need to know all the adequate information about hotel activities and facilities, and front desk employees need to know how to handle check-in system. Some knowledge of hotel is learned from the hotel working experience (Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2006). However, how to be knowledgeable as a hotel employee is learned from school (Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2006). Hotel companies such as Marriott, Hyatt and Hilton would likely to hire new employees from university or college because they all think hotel specific knowledge are important to learn in order to help hotel management (Marcel, 2014).

#### **2.3.4 Service Attitude**

Service attitude includes a service provider's feelings and behaviors towards customers (Liu and Liu, 2008). More specifically, it encompasses a number of components of how an employee presents themselves to customers, including their enthusiasm, grace, politeness, and kindness (Kuo, 2007), as well as their patience,

conscientiousness, and empathy (Kuo, 2009). Additionally, customers can read hotel employees' body language to feel whether they are showing a positive service attitude or not (Seijts et al., 2010). This matters because service attitude is central to the customer's perception of the influence, ability, knowledge, and behavior of the front line employees (Larsen, & Bastiansen, 1991).

Front office personnel attitudes can influence customers' mental states and physical needs (Kuo, Chen, & Lu, 2012). It is thus a cornerstone in determining the customers' perceptions of the interaction quality and service quality (Kuo, Chen, & Lu, 2012). Customers may change their impressions of the employees and the hotel-which in turn affects repurchasing decisions-if the receptionists show a positive service attitude during their communication (Girard, 2013). Consequently, as Chase and Bowen (1987) assert, service attitude is a core of the service industry, especially the hospitality industry.

A positive attitude by front office personnel must include the attempt to understand and the willingness to accommodate customers' cultural differences. Different cultures may have different expectations regarding individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, the social hierarchy, and masculinity-femininity (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Understanding these cultural differences will help hotel employees in operating and serving international customers (Kuo, 2007). It is therefore an important element in the successful operation and management (Huang et al., 1997; Norma, 2002; Sauders & Renaghan, 1992).

Tornow and Wiley (1991) showed that service attitude and customer satisfaction have a significant relationship. Further, Kuo (2009) claimed that employee service attitude is the most important factor for customer satisfaction because it is a major differentiator in the reputation of the hotel within the hospitality industry.

Additionally, it not only determines the positive perceptions that affect customer satisfaction, but also influences their intentions and behavior (Kuo, Chen, & Lu, 2012). For example, front desk employees' service attitudes may influence customers' decisions to patronize the hotel again. That is, if front desk employees provide more services than the customers expected, their perceptions of the hotel's service attitude might influence their satisfaction and therefore their intention of revisiting the hotel (Ajzen, 2005; Ekinici, 2001; Ekinici, Dawes, & Massey, 2008; Kuo, 2007; Liu & Liu, 2008; Tornow & Wiley, 1991). Thus, service attitude is an important grading criteria for evaluating employees. Failure to have a positive service attitude will no doubt negatively impact company performance (Liu & Liu, 2008).

#### **2.4 Training strategies of Front Office Personnel**

Training is the process which provides employees with the knowledge and skills required to operate within the systems and standards set by management of an organization (Nickson, 2009). Training is all about competence in people, especially the employees' qualities the level of service quality which reflects the modern hotel business. The qualities are about knowledge, skills and thoughts which lead to a hotel's survival and developments, it increases productivity while employees are armed with professional knowledge, experienced skills and valid thoughts. Staff especially Frontline Staff (FLS) training also motivates and inspires them by providing employees all needed information in work as well as help them to recognize how important their job is. Successful hotels always include staff training as important development strategy as training and development is seen as a key instrument in the implementation of HRM practices and policies (Min & Min, 2013).

Nadler (2016) noted that all the training strategies are meant to either improve performance on the present job of the front office personnel, train new skills for new job or new position in the future and general growth for both individuals and organization so as to be able to meet organization's current and future objectives. There are broadly two different strategies that hospitality industry may choose from for training and developing skills of its staff. These are on-the-job training given to organizational employees while conducting their regular work at the same working venues and off-the-job training involves taking employees away from their usual work environments and therefore all concentration is left out to the training. Examples of the on-the-job training include but are not limited to job rotations and transfers, coaching and/or mentoring. On the other hand, off-the-job training examples include conferences, role playing, and many more as explained below in detail. Armstrong (1995) argues that on-the-job training may consist of teaching or coaching by more experienced people or trainers at the desk or at the bench. Different organizations are motivated to take on different training methods for a number of reasons for example; (1) depending on the organization's strategy, goals and resources available, (2) depending on the needs identified at the time, and (2) the target group to be trained which may include among others individual workers, groups, teams, department or the entire organization.

#### **2.4.1 Job rotation and transfers**

Job rotation and transfers (McCourt & Eldridge 2003) as a way of developing employee skills within organization involves movements of employees from one official responsibility to another for example taking on higher rank position within the organization, and one branch of the organization to another. For transfers for example,

it could involve movement of employees from one country to another. These rotations and transfers facilitate employees acquire knowledge of the different operations within the organization together with the differences existing in different countries where the organization operates. The knowledge acquired by the selected employees for this method is beneficial to the organization as it may increase the competitive advantage of the organization.

#### **2.4.2 Coaching and/or mentoring**

This involves having the more experienced employees coach the less experienced employees (Devanna, Fombrun & Tichy 2014; McCourt & Eldridge 2003; Torrington et al. 2005). It is argued that mentoring offers a wide range of advantages for development of the responsibility and relationship building (Torrington et al. 2005). The practice is often applied to newly recruited graduates in the organization by being attached to mentor who might be their immediate managers or another senior manager. This however does not imply that older employees are excluded from this training and development method but it is mainly emphasized for the newly employed persons within the organization.

#### **2.4.3 Orientation**

This is another training and development strategy. This involves getting new employees familiarized and trained on the new job within an organization. During this process, they are exposed to different undertakings for example the nature of their new work, how to take on their identified tasks and responsibilities and what is generally expected of the employees by the organization. They are further given a general overview of the organizational working environment including for example working

systems, technology, and office layout, briefed about the existing organizational culture, health and safety issues, working conditions, processes and procedures (Armstrong, 1995).

#### **2.4.4 Conferences**

As a training and development strategy involves presentations by more than one person to a wide audience. It is more cost effective as a group of employees are trained on a particular topic all at the same time in large audiences (Armstrong, 1995). This strategy is however disadvantageous because it is not easy to ensure that all individual trainees understand the topic at hand as a whole; not all trainees follow at the same pace during the training sessions; focus may go to particular trainees who may seem to understand faster than others and thus leading to under training other individuals (Armstrong, 1995).

#### **2.4.5 Role playing**

Involves training and development strategy that attempt to capture and bring forth decision making situations to the employee being trained. In other words, the method allows employees to act out work scenarios (Devanna, Fombrun & Tichy 2014). It involves the presentation of problems and solutions for example in an organization setting for discussion. Trainees are provided with some information related to the description of the roles, concerns, objectives, responsibilities, emotions, and many more. Following is provision of a general description of the situation and the problem they face. The trainees are thereafter required to act out their roles. This method is more effective when carried out under stress-free or alternatively minimal-stress environments so as to facilitate easier learning. It is a very effective training



method for a wide range of employees for example those in sales or customer service area, management and support employees (McCourt & Eldridge 2003)

#### **2.4.6 Formal training courses and development programmes**

These are a number of strategy for developing the skills required within an organization. The course and programmes are usually a set of defined and known programmes where the contents, durations and all the details about the training are clear to both the organization and the personnel to be trained (Devanna et al., 2014). Unlike informal trainings and programmes, formal training and programmes can be planned earlier and also plan for their evaluation. Employees may undertake these courses and programmes while completely off work for a certain duration of time or alternatively be present for work on a part-time basis. These programmes can be held within the organization (in-house) or off the job. Off the job is argued to be more effective since employees are away from work place and their concentration is fully at training. Depending on the knowledge needed, organization's structure and policies, the trainers too may be coming within the corporation or outside the organization.

#### **2.5 Factors influencing training of front office personnel**

Employee is more important for the hospitality industry than other manufacturing and non-service-oriented industries because of the industry's unique characteristics: labor-intensiveness and service inseparability (Grönroos, 1990; Hayes et al., 2012). In the hospitality industry, providing quality products and services cannot be done by machines, so reliance on human labor for successful operations is heavier than in any other industries (Schneider & Bowen, 1992). Work environment plays an important role in the employee's training. Numerous behavioural studies have proved

that a pleasant and comfortable work environment improves employees' productivity and reduces turnover. Robbins (2013) pointed out that working conditions will influence training as the employee are concerned with a comfortable working environment and more likely to produce better work outcomes. Work environment can be referred as all the factors that are related about the job such as all the facilities for doing the job, comfort with the workplace, safety in the workplace, and the degree of noise. The elements of physical work environment include temperature, noise, hygiene, ventilation, and working hours should be appropriate so that the employees would not feel pressured and stressed while getting their task to be done (McCoy & Evans, 2005).

Training of front office personnel is important in a service company as they connect the hotel organization with its guests and they represent a critical factor in developing effective working relationships with guests (Gronroos, 1990). A study by Gwinner, Gremler and Bitner (1998) revealed that there are many factors that influence training need of front office personnel. Gwinner et al. (1998) affirmed that high rate of absenteeism among front office personnel, shortage of qualified front office personnel, highly competitive market, continuously changing environment, and decline in productivity among front office personnel.

### **2.5.1 Internal factors**

Despite the reduction in demand for labor force due to the development of modern technology in other industries, the hospitality sector still responsible for adding about 52000 jobs, only in June 2013 and the demand has increased 503% over the last four years (Rowe, 2013). The statistics affirm the fact that the hospitality industry is a people-driven business since technology cannot replace the level of service expected by many customers (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009). Making an investment in the human

asset is therefore worth the effort. Customers will definitely feel the difference between the service delivered by a team of unmotivated staff and a team of high-quality motivated staff. Even though it is just a part of a multifaceted process of increase the staff's working motivation, training can avoid the staff from the uncertainty of not knowing what are right to do (Decenzo & Robbins 2007).

Moreover, receiving training gives them a feeling that their works are somehow important, which motivate and retain them to work for an organization apart from just money. In addition, look at the internal aspects, unlike others, the industry has a high diversity nature by the product itself and also by the customers. The hospitality industry does not simply indicate the hotel and restaurant services as many people usually misunderstood. The segment actually provides a wide range of services including lodging, food services and other businesses such as private clubs, sports, recreational Foodservice operations, cruise ships, casinos, vending businesses, amusement and theme parks (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009).

The industry accordingly has high demand for dynamic people who acquire a variety of knowledge, skills and experience to meet the desire of a number of guests they get in touch with every day. The labor market in reality, nevertheless, shows a deficiency in supply for qualified staff (Woods, 2006). Fortunately, there is another pool of labor with people who do not attain enough skills and knowledge but are willing to take the job. Though using these people can be a solution to resolve the problem of shortage, it cannot be done without the intervention of training.

Moreover, the industry involves responsible businesses of which some training are mandatory by law such as food safety, alcohol beverage knowledge, first aids or avoidance of sexual harassment, etc. (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009). Lack of training can lead to grave problems caused by the staff who are not properly trained or informed.

Food poisoning can occur if an untrained chef mixes crab and persimmons together or serves stuffed meats undercooked for example. The case of Man Fu Yuan restaurant of the Intercontinental hotel in Singapore happened on December 2012 is a typical case. The restaurant had to close after being suspected to cause more than 200 cases of food poisoning. Aside from the risk of being lawsuit, it may also lead to greater consequences which are losing the customer loyalty and the business's reputation if training is not taken seriously.

### **2.5.2 External factors**

The increase in competition also affects on the increasing need of training. Under the pressure of a highly competitive market, many hospitality business operators impress on the use of product differentiation strategy to gain the brand awareness (Marriott 2013; Clark 2013; Andrews 2009). Different standards are applied in order to create the difference in service, from the general like quality of service, staff behaviors to more detail standards such as way to fold a napkin, way to set up a table and cutlery, welcome sayings and maximum time allowed to conduct check-in service, etc. This practice once again arises the need for training because even a staff who has a hospitality educational background or long experience in the field still requires time, effort and adequate sources of knowledge to adjust to the new rule.

In the fast growing hospitality industry, training becomes a useful assisting tool to prepare the organization from the inevitable changes in the future. A company can even happen to be a pioneer and win competitive advantages over the others if it can predict the right market trend and well prepare in advance. The development of technology which leads to a renovation of an operating checking system, for example, will simultaneously require a higher level of computer skills from the staff for the

system to be able to put the system into operation. Another typical trend is globalization. Transcended the multinational phase, many companies now operate in two or more countries as transnational or global corporations (Gee & Yim 2008). To harmonize different cultures in one union, the company thus not only need to raise the cultural awareness of their staff but also the ability of adapting and work in the new environments as the exchange human resources over nations becomes more common. In addition, there may also be the need of launching a new product or new standard requirements due to changes in the customers' preference. Retraining is therefore continually in demand to address these concerns.

## **2.6 Challenges of front office personnel training in the hospitality industry**

In modern hotel business, it is all about competence in people, and especially the front office personnel qualities. The level of service quality depends on the qualities of front office personnel. The qualities are about knowledge, skills and thoughts which lead to a hotel's survival and development. Therefore, front office personnel training is essential in many ways; it increases productivity while employees are armed with professional knowledge, experienced skills and valid thoughts; staff training also motivates and inspires workers by providing employees all needed information in work as well as help them to recognize how important their jobs are (Yafang & Wang, 2008). Side by side with the need and the important contribution of training to an organization's performance, there are many obstacles that hotel business have to overcome before reaching a delightful prospect.

### **2.6.1 Limited of Human Resource (HR) professionals' skills**

For a training process runs smoothly from the beginning to the ending stage, those who work in HR department or carry HR responsibilities contribute a decisive part in this success. Nevertheless, most of the hospitality operations are too small to enjoy the service of having special professionals to carry HR function (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009). What worse is that even when larger business operators can afford to have people who specialize in HR, these people's works are not meant to concern the training matters only but to cover anything related to their internal people. Limit in time and skills of HR managers, thus, restricts training from proceeding under the best conditions.

### **2.6.2 Time constraint and difficult in scheduling training plan**

Training is costly not only in terms of money but also in terms of the time spent. The amount of time is spent for training to take action equivalents to the time the staff and managers, in case managers are in charge of training for their subordinates, being away from their positions (Yafang & Wang, 2008). If no substitute colleagues are assigned to take up their charges, staffs that are targeted for a certain training course may not be able to present at the course because the training time coincides with their working time. The situation is particularly true during the peak season or peak hours. Moreover, in businesses that provide 24 hour service like hotel, most of the staff is required to work on shift basis which indicates the practice where staffs rotate to perform similar jobs so that the operation is able to run all day (Guo et al., 2013). People who work on night-shift may feel tired and rather want to rest than to take training. Training planner must also reserve an amount of time in between the training courses taking into account the fact that too much of training may cause unexpected side effects.

Time is needed for the trainees to applying theory into practice. Arranging the time for training courses therefore can be a very distressing problem.

### **2.6.3 Training during peak season**

Hospitality operations hire a significant number of the seasonal staff. Customers do not care whether they are permanent or temporary staff. They just care that these people represent the organization, in which they are part of. Providing quick training and ensure the quality of service for these temporary staff therefore have become one big concern of many managers when the peak season is coming (Yafang & Wang, 2008). Since these people do not commit to the organization as much as the permanent staff does, it affects on their willingness of learning to improve the performance for the organizational achievement. Managers who have to take charge of both managing the business and HR management may find it very stressful during these busy times handle bulk of works.

### **2.6.4 High staff turnover rate**

High staff turnover rate in the hospitality industry is challenge to staff training (Davies et al., 2001). The highly competitive labor market is one of the main reasons that enable the staff jump from one company to another to seek for better opportunities. Besides, many of the employees working in this industry are casual and part-time workers who only stay with the business for a short period of time (Davies et al., 2001). While this excuse for not providing training seems to be reasonable, lack of training in return may lead to staff dissatisfaction and increase the chance of resigning. This is particularly true for new employees for whom the adequate training and mentoring at first phase much influence on their decisions to leave an organization (Deery, 2008).

### **2.6.5 Lack of financial resources**

In the small and medium organizations, where every penny spent is valued, managers struggle to maintain training activities using a tight budget. When the economic downturn takes place, even those of the larger organizations suffer the same situation since the training budget will be likely among the firsts in line to be cut off (MacLean, 2013). Lacking of financial resources limits training from acquiring quality materials and allows limited room for a variety of training methods to be applied.

### **2.6.6 Selection of training materials and information**

Nowadays, thanks to the rapid growth of the Internet, trainers can easily access to an enormous sources available online easily. Just by one click and some key words, they can choose among thousands of results offered. The mentioned problem of limited financial resources also promotes the use of these free resources to reduce costs. Although its convenient usability appears to benefit the trainers who are in search of resources to design the training programs, there is no guarantee for the quality and reliability of these sources. Another problem to be concerned is to define the boundary between nice-to-know and need-to-know information in order to pay the attention to the more necessary one (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009).

Equally important, training planners should make sure that trainees are not overloaded by the knowledge delivered. George Armitage Miller (1956), a psychologist famous for his exploration on the limitation of the people's capacity of processing information explained in his research: "People have finite limits to the amount of information they can assimilate and process at one time. When people go beyond these limits "overload" results, it is under these conditions that people will become confused



and are likely to make poorer decisions based on the information they have received as opposed to making informed ones” (Malinowski 2013.).

### **2.6.7 Training of trainers**

Practically, managers usually believe that concentrate on the planning stage is enough to drive good training results and might overlook another decisive factor, which is the quality of the trainers. Very often, the staff learns their jobs from the colleagues or the managers who are not trained properly, especially when on-the job training is carried out. Even assuming that all the trainers are expertise at their own jobs, not all of them have the ability of delivering knowledge to the trainees in an easy and understandable way. The skills of speaking in front of public and inspiring others, which are fundamental for the trainers to maintain the trainees’ attention, take time to learn as well. The teaching style will then affect to the learning atmosphere and consecutively to the attitude of trainees towards that course and amount of knowledge they received.

### **2.6.8 Diversity of trainees**

The working environment of the hospitality industry creates favorable conditions for the development of a diversity workforce. Hotels, restaurants, Foodservice operators, clubs demand for a huge amount of staffs to fulfill various positions for different types of work ranging from the entry-level to the higher levels of seniors and managers. The diversity is expressed in terms of age, gender, mental/ physical abilities, sexual orientation, race and ethnic heritage (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009). These factors challenge training to be more sensitive to the differences of individuals. Different values, needs, interests and expectations must be taken into

account to choose appropriate training methods best suit all of them without causing unexpected conflicts.

### **2.6.9 Limitations of different training methods**

Regarding the training techniques, staff training can be divided into various types, in which two conceptions often heard are on-the-job and off-the-job training. These two methods are differentiated by the location where training takes place. While on-the-job training is implemented when the trainees learn by doing right at the work station and is more prioritized because it provides the necessary knowledge to perform the job “correctly”, off-the-job training allows trainees to learn away from the workplace, focuses more on soft-skills and general knowledge that help to perform the job “better” (Sommerville, 2007). Each of these methods, however, has its own limitations. Fallacious belief in the way of putting the on-the-job training method into practice leads to fruitless results. On-the-job training usually is mistaken as guiding one or group of trainees by simply let them watch and help a more-experienced peer (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009).

The experienced-staff who has to carry out this extra responsibility may find it annoying having someone follow around while they do their work if they are not well informed and prepared beforehand. Besides, as these trainers are quite familiar with the work they perform, they may skip some steps unintentionally. This mistake unceasingly causes bad “domino effect” when the trainees continue to pass down the incomplete information to other colleagues. The interruption in the middle of training because the trainers have something else to do may also cause a frustrated learning environment. Off-the-job training traditionally occurs under the classroom format. Other similar off-site activities such as attending conferences, workshops, webinars, e-learning are also

popular these days. These types of training are more expensive in the sense that the company has to prepare a location outside of the actual working environment. Also, to make the delivered messages appear to be more lively and attractive to the trainees, the training program designer must be innovative and flexible in the combination of different methods such as using PowerPoint presentation, video, role play, case study, etc. because some trainees are visual learners while others may be more auditory or kinesthetic oriented. Furthermore, off-the-job training may be not adequate to teach physical tasks because of its insufficiency of hands-on experience.

## **2.7 Effect of training strategies on front office personnel performance**

Front office personnel training plays a vital role in improving performance as well as increasing productivity of the hotel. This in turn leads to placing organizations in the better positions to face competition and stay at the top. This therefore implies an existence of a significant difference between the organizations that train their employees and organizations that do not. Existing literature presents evidence of an existence of obvious effects of training and development on employee performance. Some studies have proceeded by looking at performance in terms of employee performance in particular (Purcell, Kinnie & Hutchinson 2003; Harrison 2000) while others have extended to a general outlook of organizational performance (Guest 1997; Swart et al. 2005). In one way or another, the two are related in the sense that employee performance is a function of organizational performance since employee performance influences general organizational performance.

Wright and Geroy (2001) note that employee competencies change through effective training programs. It therefore not only improves the overall performance of the employees to effectively perform their current jobs but also enhances the

knowledge, skills and attitude of the workers necessary for the future job, thus contributing to superior organizational performance. Training has been proved to generate performance improvement related benefits for the employee as well as for the organization by positively influencing employee performance through the development of employee knowledge, skills, ability, competencies and behavior (Appiah 2010; Harrison 2000; Guest 1997). Moreover, Swart et al. (2005) elaborate on training as a means of dealing with skill deficits and performance gaps as a way of improving employee performance. According to Swart et al., (2005), bridging the performance gap refers to implementing a relevant training intervention for the sake of developing particular skills and abilities of the employees and enhancing employee performance. He further elaborates the concept by stating that training facilitates organization to recognize that its workers are not performing well and thus their knowledge, skills and attitudes need to be molded according to the firm needs. It is always so that employees possess a certain amount of knowledge related to different jobs. However, it is important to note that this is not enough and employees need to constantly adapt to new requirements of job performance. In other words, organizations need to have continuous policies of training and retaining of employees and thus not to wait for occurrences of skill and performance gaps.

According to Wright and Geroy (2001), employee competencies change through effective training programs. It not only improves the overall performance of the employees to effectively perform the current job but also enhance the knowledge, skills and attitude of the workers necessary for the future job, thus contributing to superior organizational performance. Through training the employee competencies are developed and enable them to implement the job related work efficiently, and achieve firm objectives in a competitive manner. Further still, dissatisfaction complaints, absenteeism and turnover can be greatly reduced when employees are so well trained that can experience the direct satisfaction

associated with the sense of achievement and knowledge that they are developing their inherent capabilities (Pigors & Myers 2009).

Liljander (2000) highlighted the importance of front office personnel performance during the service encounter in the hotel industry; as they illustrates the main focus in any hotel should be the personal linkage between the service provider and the guest. It means that if the frontline employees are trained and practice a positive behaviour, the guest will give a positive reaction and may give results in building a guest relationship towards the hotel itself. Turkay and Sengul (2014) stated that when employees are properly trained concerning the job and empowered, they can display behaviours that make the customer happy, while those employees who do not find their working conditions and wages adequate and who experience role ambiguity and more likely to display behaviours that make the customers unhappy. The strong relationship between the employee and guest in a period of time gives the opportunities to the hotel organization to respond to service failures or competitors before the guest lost faith with the hotel organization (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991; Storbacka, Strandvik, and Gronroos, 1994).

Arnette, Laverie, and Mclane (2002) mentioned that training office personnel can be a source of competitive advantage because most hotels depend on the frontline employees to deliver service. In other words, the frontline employee training can give an impact to the image of the organization in delivering service which leads to the satisfaction and experience to the guest in the hotel. Hartline and Ferrell (1996) stated that service firms especially to the hotel organizations must find solution to effectively manage the service providers to help ensure their attitudes and behaviour because the service providers interaction with the guest can influenced the guest's evaluation of the service encounter which is important in delivery of the quality of service.

According to Wargo (2006), there is never a second chance to make a first impression because the first impression is difficult to change. And some scholars argue that it takes a maximum of 60 seconds to make one (Wargo, 2006). For example, Psychologists Todorov and Willis argued that it takes about 10 seconds for two parties to form a generalized opinion about one another (Wargo, 2006). While during the check-in process, customer already would have a first impression to front desk employee who served that customer (Seijts et al., 2010). Furthermore, Seijts et al (2010) mentioned that the front desk is such a significant factor for the marketing of the hotel because the employees play a strong role in determining customer satisfaction with the check-in experience, which in turn determines customers' overall experience. In addition, during the check-in process, the front desk employee already showed his/her competence, knowledge, friendliness and service attitude to the customer (Meijerink, Bondarouk & Lepak, 2016). For example, if the front desk employees are trained and offer a welcoming eye contact and language, the guests will feel their requests are recognized and appreciated (Khurana, 2010). Meanwhile, a positive first impression formed helps an overall good first impression of hotel employees and even hotel. Otherwise, once customer had a negative first impression to that front desk employee, it would affect that customer had a negative first impression to the rest of employees even the entire hotel (Meijerink, Bondarouk & Lepak, 2016).

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the procedures and the methods the researcher employed to carry out the study. The section comprises of the research design, target population, sample and sampling procedures, data collecting instruments and procedures and methods of data analysis.

#### 3.2 Research design

The research employed the use of descriptive survey design. The design is concerned with conditions or relationship that prevails where the researcher does not manipulate the variables but reports the way things are (Best & Khan, 2003). According to Ferber, Sheatsley, Turner and Waksberg (1980), descriptive survey design is “a method of gathering information from a number of individuals, a ‘sample’, to learn something about the larger population from which the sample is drawn”. Further, descriptive surveys are effective means to gain data on attitudes on issues and causal relationships. However, largely, descriptive surveys are statistical association between variables. They do not account for changes in attitudes and views over time, nor do they guarantee that the questions are correctly interpreted by the respondents (May, 1997).

Descriptive survey design was used as it enabled the researcher to provide a holistic, in-depth insight and generalized understanding of training strategies of front office personnel in 3-star hotels in the Cape Coast Municipality. The benefit of a descriptive survey design is that it allows researchers to compare many different variables in existence at a given point in time in a population.

### **3.3 Population**

Research population refers to the group of entities to which the findings of the study could be universally applied (Koul, 2001). This group often has a common characteristic of interest to the researcher and about which the study seeks understanding. The population of this study included sixteen (16) registered 3-Star hotels in the Cape Coast Municipality. The target population for this research consisted of 64 front office personnel of the 3 Star hotels in the Cape Coast Municipality. For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose a number of respondents from each of the 3 star hotels with the reason that it is impracticable and also take a lot of time for the researcher to consider all the employees of the 3 star hotels.

### **3.4 Sample size and sampling technique**

Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent the entire population in the study (Amedahe, 2004). Sample on the hand consist of a carefully selected unit of the population for a particular study (Sarantakos, 2005). Gay (1992) asserts that in general, the minimum number of subjects believed to be acceptable for a study depends upon the type of research involved. It is worthy to note that, the most important task of sample selection is to come up with a sample that is representative of the population under consideration.

In determining the sample size for the study, all the 64 front office personnel were included in the study since the population was small. Purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting front office personnel from each of the selected 3-star hotel in the Cape Coast Municipality. The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the respondents possesses. It is a nonrandom technique that does not need underlying



theories or a set number of respondents. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find respondents who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002, Lewis & Sheppard, 2006). Purposive sampling is especially exemplified through the key informant technique (Bernard, 2002, Garcia 2006, Lyon & Hardesty 2005), wherein one or a few individuals are solicited to act as guides to a culture.

### **3.5 Data collection instrument**

The choice of data collection instrument(s) for a particular study depends on the research approach adopted, thus whether quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach as well as the pertinent research questions posed (Boateng, 2014). In this study, the quantitative approach was adopted. Therefore, for the purpose of data collection and analysis, the researcher employed questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. Questionnaire is regarded as an effective instrument for securing factual information about practices and conditions of which the respondents are presumed to have knowledge and opinions on (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005).

Questionnaire was used simply because they can reach a large number of respondents within a short time, it gives the respondents adequate time to respond to the items, offers a sense of security and confidentiality to the respondents and lastly it tends to be objective since there is no bias resulting from the personal characteristics (Ogula, 2005). The questionnaires were divided into various sections based on the research objectives. Section I of the entire questionnaire dealt with demographic characteristics. Section II covered the training strategies of front office personnel in 3-star hotels, section III dealt with the factors influencing training of front office personnel in 3star hotels, and section IV dealt with the effects of training strategies on

front office personnel performance in service delivery. Closed-ended questions were used for this study. Closed ended were employed for the reason that they are easy to ask and quick to answer, they require no writing by either respondent or interviewer, and their analysis is straightforward (Naoum, 1998).

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

Validity as the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomena under study while reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Carmines and Zeller (1979) contend that the reliability of a research instrument is characterized by its ability to reproduce data in a consistent way on repeated trials though there will always be a presence of chance error no matter how reliable the method is. Thus, reliability exists when the operations of a study such as the data collection procedures can be repeated with the same results (Phoya, 2012).

The researcher ensured the validation and reliability of the questionnaire in various ways by utilizing different approaches. In an attempt to ensure that the questionnaire measured what they were supposed to measure, the researcher designed the questionnaire himself with reference to the purpose of the study and the pertinent research questions. Secondly, the researcher gave a draft to her supervisor at the University of Education, Winneba, Kumasi Campus to check whether the items measure the intended purpose (face validity). The supervisor found out whether the items cover all the research questions (content validity) and the extent to which the items measure specific construct (construct validity). The examination of the items

helped the researcher to reshape and reconstruct items which were not clear to the respondents.

### **3.7 Data collection procedure**

The researcher ensured that the research instruments were complete and readily available. The questionnaires were free of error, the number of copies also adequate. The questionnaire was administered personally. The researcher notified the manager of the selected 3-Star hotel in Cape Coast Municipality of the intention to conduct the study and the proposed dates. This was done through a letter of introduction from the University of Education, Winneba – Kumasi Campus in which the researcher sought permission and assistance for the study. The researcher then went to each of the selected 3-Star hotel personally and administered the questionnaires to the front office personnel, gave them ample time to fill them and collected them at an agreed later date.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

This study used descriptive statistics to collect quantitative data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to analyze the quantitative data. Coding was done and the data from completed questionnaires was entered on the SPSS 23.0. The data was edited so as to ensure completeness of responses and descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. This helped the researcher draw conclusions and make recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results and discussions of the study obtained from questionnaires. It focuses on training strategies of front office personnel in 3 star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality. The chapter specifically looks at the training strategies of front office personnel in 3 star hotels, factors influencing training of front office personnel in 3star hotels, and the effects of training strategies on front office personnel performance in service delivery.

#### **4.2 Response Rate**

Out of the total number of 64 questionnaires administered, 56 were completed and returned given a response rate of 93.3%. This showed a favourable response rate as compared to what was established by Sekaran (2003) in literature, that in any given survey exercise a response rate of 30% is considered most acceptable. The remaining 10 questionnaires were not retrieved.

#### **4.3 Socio – Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The Socio-demographic characteristics of front officer personnel concentrate on their gender group, age category, educational level, and years of service. The background of respondents were very necessary to enable the researcher describe the peculiar characteristics of the respondents as well as providing the basis for evaluating training strategies of front office personnel in 3 star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality.

### 4.3.1 Gender of Respondents

The results from the survey as presented in summary from Table 4.1 shows the gender of respondents.

**Table 4. 1: Gender of respondents**

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	10	17.9
Female	46	82.1
Total	56	100.0

*Source: Field Work, 2020*

As depicted in Table 4.1, majority (82.1%) of the front office personnel were females. They formed the majority because it is perceived that female are seriously engaged in hotel business. It could be strongly confirmed from the researcher's observation, it could be realised that all the department of the sampled 3 star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality were dominated by females. The remaining (17.9%) comprised their male counterparts.

### 4.3.2 Age group of the Respondents

Table 4.2 presents the summary of the age group of the front office personnel selected in the hotel.

**Table 4. 2: Age group of respondents**

Working experience	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
18-30years	41	73.2
31-40years	14	25.0
41-50years	1	1.8
Total	56	100.0

*Source: Field Work, 2020*

As indicated in Table 4.2, the data collected from the field indicated that respondents who participated in the survey and responded to issues raised had majority of them thus (73.2%) between the age ranges of 18-30years, followed by those between the ranges of 31-40years bringing the percentage to 25.0%. The remaining 1.8% of the front office personnel was between the ages of 41-50. This is an indication that majority of the front office personnel are at their youthful age between the ages of 18-30years.

### 4.3.3 Educational Level of Respondents

Responses of the front office personnel are regarding their educational level are presented in Table 4.3

**Table 4. 3: Educational level of respondents**

<b>Educational level</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Masters	1	1.8
Bachelor	40	71.4
Diploma/HND	15	26.8
Total	56	100.0

*Source: Field Work, 2020*

Most respondents, the research revealed that, had attained one form of education or the other. Statistics confirmed that 1.8% of the front office personnel have had education up to the Masters level. In addition, 71.4% of the front office personnel have attained education up to the Bachelor level. Also, 26.8% of the respondents are with Diploma/HND qualification. The researcher observation brought to the fore that these with tertiary education categories of respondents were in the supervisory level of the hotel seeing to the day to day running of the hotel and its operation.

#### 4.3.4 Number of Years Spend on Job

Table 4.4 gives a clear picture of the number of years the employees had worked with the hotels.

**Table 4. 4: Number of years worked in the hotel**

Years of Service	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1-5years	45	80.4
6-10years	10	17.9
11-15years	1	1.8
Total	56	100.0

*Source: Field Work, 2020*

As depicted in Table 4.4, who took part in the research survey had worked with the hotel for a period of 1-5 years representing 80.4%. In addition, 17.9% of the front office personnel had worked with the hotel for 6-10years. The remaining 1.8% of the front office personnel had worked with the hotel for and 11-15years. This implies that a greater percentage of the front office personnel had worked with the hotel for less than 6years and also as the years increase, front office personnel leaves their job. These results further indicate that the 3star hotels in Cape Coast Metropolis does not have good employee retention systems. The results also imply that these employees require constant training and development programs to keep them updated with their skills in order to encourage the front office personnel to stay in the hotel.

#### 4.4 Training strategies of front office personnel in 3 star hotels

The respondents were asked on the training strategies of front office personnel in 3 star hotels and to rank their level of agreement or disagreement along a number of constructs. The study used a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”, in descending order. In addition, the Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), and standard deviation (SD) were computed. Table 4.5 presents the results

**Table 4. 5: Responses on the Training strategies of front office personnel**

<b>Training strategies</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Hotel manager instruct front office personnel as a way of training	56	3.89	.985	Agreed
An experience employee act as a trainer in training front office personnel	56	3.75	1.066	Agreed
Front office personnel assume the role of a particular person in the situation as a way of acquiring skills and knowledge	56	3.46	1.159	Agreed
The hotel manager advises and encourage front office personnel to new ideas	56	3.46	.953	Agreed
Front office personnel are placed under a particular supervisor who functions as a coach in training	56	3.07	1.142	Agreed
The hotel employs instructor to train front office personnel periodically	56	2.96	1.128	Disagreed
The hotel organise training workshop or conference by employing an expert	56	2.32	1.011	Disagreed
Front office personnel are periodically move from one department to another to acquire new skills and knowledge	56	2.18	.936	Disagreed
Personnel are grouped for discussions and activities	56	2.04	.830	Disagreed
The hotel employs on online videos, tests, and courses to deliver training to front office personnel	56	1.96	.830	Disagreed
Front office personnel are sent to different hotel to learn new skills and knowledge	56	1.89	.562	Disagreed

Note:  $\leq 3.0 = \text{Disagreed}$   $\geq 3.0 = \text{Agreed}$

Source: Field Work, 2020

The data on Table 4.5 indicate that hotel manager instruct front office personnel as a way of training the front office personnel. This statement had a mean score of 3.89 and a standard deviation of .985. This affirmed that the selected 3star hotel in the Cape Coast Municipality instruct front office personnel as a training strategy. The view of the respondents aligns with the study of McCourt and Eldridge (2003) that instruction



from managers is a way of developing employee skills within organization. With this training strategy, managers instruct by providing some information related to the description of the roles, concerns, objectives, responsibilities, emotions, to the staff. This method is more effective when carried out under stress-free or alternatively minimal-stress environments so as to facilitate easier learning (McCourt & Eldridge, 2003).

Moreover, the respondents agreed that an experience employee act as a trainer in training front office personnel. This finding had a mean score of 3.75 and standard deviation of 1.066. This finding aligns with the work of Devanna et al. (2014) who asserted that more experienced and knowledge employees instruct the less experienced employees. It is argued that instructing officers a wide range of advantages for development of the responsibility and relationship building (Torrington et al., 2005). The practice is often applied to newly recruited graduates in the organization by being attached to mentor who might be their immediate managers or another senior manager. This however does not imply that older employees are excluded from this training and strategy method but it is mainly emphasized for the newly employed persons within the organization.

With a mean score of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 1.159, the respondents agreed that front office personnel assume the role of a particular person in the situation as a way of acquiring skills and knowledge. This indicates that front office personnel get trained by assuming the role of other staff. This training and development strategy attempt to capture and bring forth decision making situations to the front office personnel. The strategy allows employees to act out work scenarios (Devanna, Fombrun & Tichy 2014). It involves the presentation of problems and solutions for example in an organization setting for discussion.

Again, the hotel manager advises and encourage front office personnel to new ideas as a training strategy. This statement had a mean score of 3.46 and a standard deviation of .953. The result concurs with Torrington et al. (2005), that managers advises and encourage as a way of training new employees to be familiarized on the new job within an organization. During this process, they are exposed to different undertakings for example the nature of their new work, how to take on their identified tasks and responsibilities and what is generally expected of the employees by the organization.

Furthermore, the respondents agreed that front office personnel are placed under a particular supervisor who functions as a coach in training. This statement has a corresponding mean score of 3.07 and a standard deviation of 1.142. This affirmed that placing the front office personnel under a particular supervisor to functions as a coach is a training and development strategy employed by the 3star hotel in the Cape Coast Municipality. This strategy involves getting new front office personnel familiarized and trained on the new job within the hotel. During this process, they are exposed to different undertakings for example the nature of their new work, how to take on their identified tasks and responsibilities and what is generally expected of the employees by the organization. They are further given a general overview of the organizational working environment including for example working systems, technology, and office layout, briefed about the existing organizational culture, health and safety issues, working conditions, processes and procedures (Armstrong, 1995).

However, the respondents disagreed that the hotel employs instructor to train front office personnel periodically. This statement had a mean of 2.96 and a standard deviation of 1.128. Moreover, with a mean of 2.32 and a standard deviation of 1.011, the respondents disagreed that the hotel organise training workshop or conference by employing an expert. Furthermore, the respondents disagreed that front office personnel

are periodically move from one department to another to acquire new skills and knowledge. This statement attained a mean of 2.18 and a standard deviation of .936. Conversely, the respondents disagreed to the statement that personnel at the hotel are grouped for discussions and activities as a training strategy. This statement had a mean of 2.04 and a standard deviation of .830. Again, with a mean of 1.96 and a standard deviation of .830 the respondents disagreed that the hotel employs on online videos, tests, and courses to deliver training to front office personnel. The respondents further disagreed that front office personnel are sent to different hotel to learn new skills and knowledge as a training strategy. This statement had a mean of 1.89 and a standard deviation of .562. All these statements failed to meet the predetermined cut-off point of 3.0.

The result shows that instruction from the hotel managers, experience employee acting as a trainer, front office personnel assuming the role of a particular person in the situation as a way of acquiring skills and knowledge, advises and encouragement from hotel managers, placing front office personnel under particular supervisor who functions as a coach were discovered as training strategies for training front office personnel in 3 star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality. Nadler (2016) noted that all the training strategies are meant to either improve performance on the present job of the front office personnel, train new skills for new job or new position in the future and general growth for both individuals and organization so as to be able to meet organization's current and future objectives. Armstrong (1995) indicated that on-the-job training such as; job rotations and transfers, coaching and/or mentoring, and also off-the-job training such as; conferences, role playing are training strategies employed by organisations. Different organizations are motivated to take on different training methods for a number of reasons for example; (1) depending on the organization's strategy, goals and resources available, (2) depending on the needs

identified at the time, and (2) the target group to be trained which may include among others individual workers, groups, teams, department or the entire organization.

#### 4.5 Factors influencing training of front office personnel in 3star hotels

This section sought to examine the factors influencing training of front office personnel in 3star hotels. The study used a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, in descending order. The mean (X), and standard deviation (SD) were computed. Table 4.6 presents the results.

**Table 4.6: Responses on the factors influencing training of front office personnel**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Continuously changing environment	56	4.04	.738	Agreed
Reduced patronage from customers	56	3.71	1.202	Agreed
Increased in complaint from customers	56	3.71	1.202	Agreed
Decline in productivity among front office personnel	56	3.54	1.159	Agreed
Shortage of qualified front office personnel	56	3.46	1.190	Agreed
Reduction in job involvement and organizational commitment	56	3.39	1.186	Agreed
Highly competitive market	56	3.21	1.411	Agreed
Visible negative work attitude such as lateness etc	56	2.82	1.190	Disagreed
Noticed of inability of front office personnel to take up challenges	56	2.79	1.022	Disagreed
Human resources are decisive to the hotel success	56	2.32	.936	Disagreed
High rate of absenteeism among front office personnel	56	1.93	.759	Disagreed

Note:  $\leq 3.0 = \text{Disagreed}$   $\geq 3.0 = \text{Agreed}$

Source: Field Work, 2020

As depicted in Table 4.6, with a mean of 4.04 and a standard deviation of .738, the respondents agreed that continuously changing environment influence training need of front office personnel in 3star hotels. This indicates that work environment plays an important role in the front office personnel training. Robbins (2013) pointed

out that working conditions influence training as the employee are concerned with a comfortable working environment and more likely to produce better work outcomes. The elements of physical work environment such as; temperature, noise, hygiene, and working hours should be appropriate so that the employees would not feel pressured and stressed while getting their task to be done (McCoy & Evans, 2005).

Moreover, the respondents agreed that the reduced patronage from customers also influence training need of front office personnel in 3star hotels. This statement had a mean of 3.71 and a standard deviation of 1.202. As indicated by Hayes and Ninemeier (2009), reduction in patronage of the hotel encourage training needs for the employees. Hotel staff receiving training gives them a feeling that their works are somehow important, which motivate and retain them to work for the hotel apart from just money. Moreover, the industry involves responsible businesses of which some training are mandatory by law such as food safety, alcohol beverage knowledge, first aids or avoidance of sexual harassment, etc. (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009).

Concerning whether increased in complaint from customers influence training need of front office personnel in 3star hotels, majority of the respondents agreed to that. This statement had a mean of 3.71 and a standard deviation of 1.202. On whether decline in productivity among front office personnel influence training need of front office personnel in 3star hotels, the respondents agreed to the statement. The findings depicted a mean score of 3.55 and a standard deviation of 1.159. The finding buttresses with the work of Woods (2006) who affirmed that complaints from customers and decline in productivity increase the need for training. The hotel industry accordingly has high demand for dynamic people who acquire a variety of knowledge, skills and experience to meet the desire of a number of guests they get in touch with every day.

Furthermore, the respondents agreed to shortage of qualified front office personnel as a factor that influence training need of front office personnel. This statement had a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 1.190. On the other hand, with a mean of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 1.186, the respondents agreed that reduction in job involvement and organizational commitment influence training need of front office personnel. According to Woods (2006), the labor market in reality, nevertheless, shows a deficiency in supply for qualified staff. Fortunately, there is another pool of labor with people who do not attain enough skills and knowledge but are willing to take the job. Though using these people can be a solution to resolve the problem of shortage, it cannot be done without the intervention of training.

In addition, the respondents further asserted that highly competitive market influence the training needs of front office personnel. This statement attained a mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 1.411. The result agrees with Marriott (2013) that increase in competition affects on the increasing need of training. Under the pressure of a highly competitive market, many hospitality business operators impress on the use of product differentiation strategy to gain the brand awareness. Different standards are applied in order to create the difference in service, from the general like quality of service, staff behaviors to more detail standards such as way to fold a napkin, way to set up a table and cutlery, welcome sayings and maximum time allowed to conduct check-in service, etc. This practice once again arises the need for training because even a staff who has a hospitality educational background or long experience in the field still requires time, effort and adequate sources of knowledge to adjust to the new rule.

On the contrary the respondents disagreed that visible negative work attitude such as lateness encourage training need of front office personnel. This statement reflected a mean

of 2.82 and a standard deviation of 1.90. Also, respondents disagreed that noticed of inability of front office personnel to take up challenges influence training of front office personnel. This statement had a mean of 2.79 and a standard deviation of 1.022. In addition, with a mean of 2.74 and a standard deviation of 1.398, the respondents disagreed that students unable to afford basic necessities impede effective implementation of inclusive education of students with special needs. Conversely, the respondents disagreed that the decisive of human resources to the hotel success influence training need of front office personnel. This statement had a mean score of 2.32 and a standard deviation of 0.936. However, the respondents disagreed that High rate of absenteeism among front office personnel influence training need of front office personnel. This statement had a mean of 1.93 and a standard deviation of 0.759. All these statements failed to meet the cut-off point of 3.0.

The study shows that continuously changing environment, reduced patronage from customers, increased in complaint from customers, decline in productivity among front office personnel, and shortage of qualified front office personnel are the factors that influence training of front office personnel in 3star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality. Furthermore, reduction in job involvement and organizational commitment, and highly competitive market also influence training of front office personnel in 3star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality. The result aligns with the study by Gwinner, et al. (1998) that there are many factors that influence training need of front office personnel. Gwinner et al. (1998) affirmed that shortage of qualified front office personnel, highly competitive market, continuously changing environment, and decline in productivity among front office personnel.

#### 4.6 Effects of training strategies on front office personnel performance

In investigating the effects of training strategies on front office personnel performance in service delivery, descriptive analysis of front office personnel performance was determined.

##### 4.6.1 Descriptive Analysis of front office personnel performance

The main issue considered under this section related to the overall front office personnel performance measurement at various 3star hotels. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to statements (indicators) on the performance measurement at the various hotels. The responses gathered with the aid of questionnaire administration are presented in Table 4.7.

**Table 4. 6: Responses on employee performance variable**

Performance variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Improves communication between management and employees	56	4.50	.831	Agreed
Motivates employees and helps them perform better	56	4.25	1.031	Agreed
Strengthens front office personnel competitive advantage	56	4.14	1.135	Agreed
Increases job satisfaction and recognition of front office personnel	56	4.14	1.197	Agreed
Increased knowledge and confidence	56	4.07	1.042	Agreed
Reduce anxiety of front office personnel	56	3.96	1.026	Agreed
Sustains a positive attitude towards customer service	56	3.96	1.026	Agreed
Reduces accidents and safety violations	56	3.86	.999	Agreed
Enhances front office personnel capabilities	56	3.04	1.439	Agreed

Note:  $\leq 3.0 = Disagreed$   $\geq 3.0 = Agreed$

Source: Field Work, 2020

As depicted in Table 4.7, the respondents agreed to all the performance variable. It can be seen that with a mean score of 4.50 and a standard deviation of .831,



training strategies improves communication between management and employees. Followed by motivating front office personnel and helps them perform better. This statement had a mean of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 1.031. It can also be explained that training strategies strengthens front office personnel competitive advantage at the various selected hotels with a mean of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 1.135. On the other hand, with a mean of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 1.197, the respondents indicated that training strategies increases job satisfaction and recognition of front office personnel.

The respondents further asserted that training strategies increase knowledge and confidence of front office personnel. This statement had a mean of 4.07 and a standard deviation of 1.042. According to the respondent's training strategies reduce anxiety of front office personnel, sustains a positive attitude towards customer service, reduces accidents and safety violations, and enhances front office personnel capabilities had the lowest mean value of 3.96, 3.96, 3.86, and 3.04 respectively. This implies that training improve knowledge, skills and attitudes towards work related tasks. It is one of the most important potential motivators which can lead to both short-term and long-term benefits for individuals and organizations. Sommerville (2007) asserted that training increases job satisfaction and recognition, encourages self-development and self-confidence, moves employee closer to personal goals, helps the employee become an effective problem solver, and allows the employee to become productive more quickly. Sommerville (2007) further revealed that by training, employees get familiar with their work tasks, advanced knowledge and techniques which improve their capabilities, increases productivity. During the training, employees will be introduced what is the work is about, how to do, what kind of role does the job play in the whole business, and it helps them to understand their work better.

#### 4.6.2 Regression Analysis

In order to determine the effect of training strategies on front office personnel performance, regression analysis was used. The results are summarized and the original Table from SPSS-23.0.

**Table 4. 7: Regression result on the effect of training strategies on performance**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.296 <sup>a</sup>	.087	.071	1.005	1.005	5.172	1	54	.027

a. Predictors: (Constant), training strategies variables

b. Dependent Variable: front office personnel performance variables

From the summary model Table 4.8, the study found a positive and significant ( $p=0.027<0.05$ ) relationship between training strategies and front office personnel service performance. It also reveal that the number of column R, is the relationship between training strategies and front office personnel performance (correlation coefficient) is 0.296 which means there is a strong and direct or positive effect of training strategies on front office personnel performance. R square states the magnitude of the influence of training strategies on front office personnel performance in service delivery (coefficient of determination) is 0.087. This means the magnitude of the effect of training strategies on front office personnel performance is 8.7%, while the remaining 91.3% (100% – 8.7%) is influenced by variables – other variables not examined in this study.

**Table 4. 8: Result of coefficient regression- front office personnel performance**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.951	.510		5.782	.000
Training strategies	.323	.142	.296	2.274	.027

a. Dependent Variable: front office personnel performance in service delivery

Based on the Table 4.9 of regression coefficient test results, then obtained are analyzed that the regression equation to estimate front office personnel performance is influenced by the training strategies is  $Y = 2.951 + 0.323X$  where Y is the front office personnel performance and X is the training strategies. Based on the results, it is known that there is a direct effect of training strategies on front office personnel performance, then the performance of front office personnel will continue to increase if they get the appropriate training. The respondents in this research ranked as top five training strategies that enhance their performance as follows: hotel manager instructing front office personnel, an experience employee act as a trainer in training front office personnel, front office personnel assuming the role of a particular person in the situation as a way of acquiring skills and knowledge, hotel manager advising and encouraging front office personnel to new ideas from books, and front office personnel are placed under a particular supervisor who functions as a coach in training.

The finding concurs with the study by Purcell et al. (2003) that front office personnel training plays a vital role in improving performance as well as increasing productivity of the hotel. This in turn leads to placing organizations in the better positions to face competition and stay at the top. This therefore implies an existence of a significant difference between the organizations that train their employees and organizations that do not. Wright and Geroy (2001) noted that employee competencies change through effective training programs. It therefore not only improves the overall performance of the employees to effectively perform their current jobs but also enhances the knowledge, skills an attitude of the workers necessary for the future job, thus contributing to superior organizational performance. Training has been proved to generate performance improvement related benefits for the employee as well as for the

organization by positively influencing employee performance through the development of employee knowledge, skills, ability, competencies and behavior (Appiah 2010)

Swart et al. (2005) elaborate on training as a means of dealing with skill deficits and performance gaps as a way of improving employee performance. According to Swart et al., (2005), bridging the performance gap refers to implementing a relevant training intervention for the sake of developing particular skills and abilities of the employees and enhancing employee performance. He further elaborate the concept by stating that training facilitate organization to recognize that its workers are not performing well and a thus their knowledge, skills and attitudes needs to be molded according to the firm needs. It is always so that employees possess a certain amount of knowledge related to different jobs.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter sums up the findings from the study, draws conclusions arising from the study and makes relevant recommendations based on the findings and conclusions.

#### 5.2 Summary of Key Findings

A number of findings were made after a discussion of the responses. They are summarized as below;

##### 5.2.1 Training strategies of front office personnel in 3 star hotels

- The study indicated that the 3 star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality provides training to front office personnel by providing instruction, allowing experience employee to act as a trainer, and making front office personnel assume the role of a particular person in the situation as a way of acquiring skills and knowledge.
- The finding showed that hotel managers advise and encourage front office personnel, and place front office personnel under particular supervisor were discovered as training strategies for training front office personnel in 3 star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality.

##### 5.2.2 Factors influencing training of front office personnel in 3star hotels

- The study showed that continuously changing environment, reduced patronage from customers, increased in complaint from customers, decline in productivity

among front office personnel, and shortage of qualified front office personnel are the factors that influence training of front office personnel in 3star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality.

- Furthermore, reduction in job involvement and organizational commitment, and highly competitive market also influence training of front office personnel in 3star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality.

### **5.2.3 Effects of training strategies on front office personnel performance**

- It appeared from the study that training improves communication between management and front office personnel, motivates the front office personnel and helps them perform better, strengthens front office personnel competitive advantage, increases job satisfaction and recognition of front office personnel, and increase knowledge and confidence of front office personnel.
- The study found a positive and significant ( $p=0.000<0.01$ ) relationship between training strategies employed by the 3star hotels and front office personnel performance
- It appeared from the study that the effect of training strategies on front office personnel performance is 8.7%, while the remaining 91.3% ( $100\% - 8.7\%$ ) is influenced by other variables.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

In modern hotel business, it is all about competence in people, and especially the front office personnel qualities. The level of service quality depends on the qualities of employees. The qualities are about knowledge, skills and thoughts which lead to a

hotel's survival and development. Therefore, front office personnel training is essential in many ways and many training strategies are adopted by hotel managers. The study indicated that instruction from the hotel managers, experience employee acting as a trainer, front office personnel assuming the role of a particular person in the situation as a way of acquiring skills and knowledge are the training strategies employed in training front office personnel in 3 star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality. The finding further revealed that advises and encouragement from hotel managers, placing front office personnel under particular supervisor who functions as a coach were discovered as training strategies for training front office personnel in 3 star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality.

The study indicated that continuously changing environment, reduced patronage from customers, increased in complaint from customers, decline in productivity among front office personnel, and shortage of qualified front office personnel are the factors that influence training of front office personnel in 3star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality. Also, reduction in job involvement and organizational commitment, and highly competitive market also influence training of front office personnel in 3star hotels in Cape Coast Municipality.

Front office personnel training is an essential management tool, it has many benefits, such as improving communication between management and front office personnel, motivating the front office personnel and helps them perform better, and strengthening front office personnel competitive advantage. Front office personnel training is a way of, upgrading their skills, preparing employees for self-development, increasing job satisfaction and recognition of front office personnel, and increase knowledge and confidence of front office personnel. The study found a positive and

significant relationship between training strategies employed in the 3star hotels and front office performance.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are being made:

1. The hotel managers should make the front office personnel know the training strategy and understand the importance of it. The hotel manager could explain to the front office personnel about the objectives of the trainings, and what personnel will benefit from the training, meanwhile, the front office personnel should be told that how can they use what they learnt from the trainings in improving the hotel performance.
2. The hotel managers should planned to invite employees and trainers from sister hotels to introduce their experiences is a good way to remind the front office personnel of the importance of training.
3. Communication between the hotel management and front office personnel should be increase by getting feedback from front office personnel in order to know what they like and what can be improved in the trainings to get better outcomes. And trainers can observe while conducting trainings, some employees would not express themselves even though they do not feel satisfied with the trainings.
4. Moreover, during any organized training the hotel managements could attend the trainings themselves to find the problems and how does it feel when they are trainees. To understand each other better will bring better results for the trainings.



5. The front office personnel should be guided to realize that improving themselves is the main aim of training, thereby providing better customer service.

### **5.5 Suggestion for Further Studies**

A further research could be conducted to find out the implications of poor staff training on hotel performance. A similar study can also be conducted either in a different geographical location in an entirely different region since the current research was carried in Cape Coast Municipality in the Central Region. Moreover, construct validity of the staff training should be examined and ascertain the performance of staff after receiving any training.

Also, further studies should be conducted to identify and control possible effects that were not considered in this study, more variables should be studied in future, such as demographic characteristics, personal characteristics, abilities, and needs for goal achievement in examining training strategies. Extra studies might investigate more demographically different groups of front office personnel to determine whether diverse training strategies should be used.

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**APPENDIX**

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION, KUMASI**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FRONT OFFICE PERSONNEL**

**TOPIC:** TRAINING STRATEGIES OF FRONT OFFICE PERSONNEL IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY. A CASE STUDY OF THREE STAR HOTELS IN THE CAPE COAST MUNICIPALITY

The researcher, a student of the University of Education, Winneba - Kumasi Campus is seeking information relating to the above mentioned topic. The information that you are to provide is purely for an academic exercise and would be treated with necessary confidentiality. Please offer answers to all the questions in all frankness as much as possible and to the best of your knowledge. You may tick (✓) where applicable or give a brief explanation where necessary.

**Section A: Demographic Background**

1. Gender:            Male ( )        Female ( )
  
2. Age:  
a. 18-30years ( )    b. 31-40years ( )    c. 41-50year ( )    d. 50+ ( )
  
3. Educational Background:  
a. Masters ( )        b. Bachelors ( )        c. Diploma ( ) d. Certificate ( )  
e. If other specify:.....
  
4. Marital Status:  
a. Married ( )        b. Single ( )    c. Divorced ( )        d. Widow ( )
  
5. Years of Service:  
a. 1- 5 years ( )    b. 6-10 ( )    c. 10-15 years ( )    d. 16+ ( )

**Section B: Training strategies of front office personnel in 3 star hotels.**

6. Please indicate the extent to which you agree on the following statements about the training strategies of front office personnel. Please rate using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents strongly disagree, 2 represents disagree, 3 uncertain, 4 represents agree and 5 represents strongly agree. *Please tick [√] the appropriate box below.*

S/no.	Training strategies	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Front office personnel are placed under a particular supervisor who functions as a coach in training					
2.	Front office personnel are periodically move from one department to another to acquire new skills and knowledge					
3.	The hotel employs instructor to train front office personnel periodically					
4.	The hotel organise training workshop or conference by employing an expert					
5.	The hotel employs on online videos, tests, and courses to deliver training to front office personnel					
6.	An experience employee act as a trainer in training front office personnel					
7.	Front office personnel assume the role of a particular person in the situation as a way of acquiring skills and knowledge					
8.	The hotel manager advises and encourage front office personnel to new ideas from books					
9.	Personnel are grouped for discussions and activities					
10.	Front office personnel are sent to different hotel to learn new skills and knowledge					
11.	Hotel manager instruct front office personnel as a way of training					



**Section B: Factors influencing training of front office personnel in 3star hotels.**

7. Please indicate the extent to which you agree on the following statements about the factors influencing training of front office personnel. Please rate using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents strongly disagree, 2 represents disagree, 3 uncertain, 4 represents agree and 5 represents strongly agree. *Please tick [√] the appropriate box below.*

S/no.	Factors influencing training	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	High rate of absenteeism among front office personnel					
2.	Human resources are decisive to the hotel success					
3.	Shortage of qualified front office personnel					
4.	Highly competitive market					
5.	Continuously changing environment					
6.	Decline in productivity among front office personnel					
7.	Increased in complaint from customers					
8.	Reduced patronage from customers					
9.	Visible negative work attitude such as lateness etc					
10.	Noticed of inability of front office personnel to take up challenges					
11.	Reduction in job involvement and organizational commitment					

**Section C: Effects of training strategies on front office personnel performance in service delivery.**

8. Please indicate the extent to which you agree on the following statements about the effects of training strategies on front office personnel performance in service delivery. Please rate using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 represents strongly disagree, 2 represents disagree, 3 uncertain, 4 represents agree and 5 represents strongly agree. *Please tick [√] the appropriate box below.*

S/no.	Effect of training	Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Increased knowledge and confidence					
2.	Reduce anxiety of front office personnel					
3.	Motivates employees and helps them perform better					
4.	Improves communication between management and employees					
5.	Sustains a positive attitude towards customer service					
6.	Reduces accidents and safety violations					
7.	Helps organizational development					
8.	Strengthens front office personnel competitive advantage					
9.	Enhances front office personnel capabilities					
10.	Increases job satisfaction and recognition of front office personnel					